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Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 15 May 2008 from the Co-Chairpersons of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Pursuant to paragraph 105 of General Assembly resolution 62/215 of 22 December 2007, we were appointed as Co-Chairpersons of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, which was established pursuant to paragraph 73 of resolution 59/24, of 17 November 2004. In accordance with paragraph 91 of resolution 61/222 of 20 December 2006, paragraphs 79 and 80 of resolution 60/30 of 29 November 2005, and as reaffirmed by paragraph 105 of resolution 62/215, the Working Group met at United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 28 April to 2 May 2008.

We have the honour to submit to you the outcome of the meeting, which consists of the attached joint statement of the Co-Chairpersons of the Working Group. It provides a summary of key issues, ideas and proposals raised during the meeting under the various agenda items (see A/AC.276/2) and some concluding remarks based on our assessment of the discussions.

We kindly request that the present letter and the joint statement of the Co-Chairpersons of the Working Group be circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly under the agenda item "Oceans and the law of the sea" in accordance with paragraph 94 of resolution 61/222, which recognized the importance of making the outcomes of the Working Group widely available.

(*Signed*) Juan Manuel **Gómez-Robledo**
Robert **Hill**
Co-Chairpersons

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Annex

Joint statement of the Co-Chairpersons of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction

1. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction held its second meeting in New York, from 28 April to 2 May 2008. The meeting of the Working Group was convened in accordance with paragraph 91 of resolution 61/222 of 20 December 2006 and paragraphs 79 and 80 of resolution 60/30 of 29 November 2005, as reaffirmed by paragraph 105 of resolution 62/215 of 22 December 2007.

2. The following supporting documentation was available to the meeting: (a) report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/62/66/Add.2); (b) provisional agenda (A/AC.276/L.1); and (c) draft format and annotated provisional agenda and organization of work (A/AC.276/L.2). The meeting adopted the provisional agenda (A/AC.276/2) and agreed to proceed on the basis of the annotated provisional agenda and organization of work.

3. As indicated in the format for the meeting, the present joint statement of the Co-Chairpersons summarizes key issues, ideas and proposals raised during the meeting. In addition to a brief summary of the scientific presentations delivered at the beginning of the meeting, the statement provides an overview of general considerations raised by delegations, a summary of key issues, ideas and proposals on the issues listed in paragraph 91 of resolution 61/222 and reflected in agenda item 5, and some concluding remarks by the Co-Chairpersons based on their assessment of the discussions.

Scientific presentations

4. Prior to commencing its deliberations, the Working Group heard the following scientific presentations: "Linking biodiversity in the deep sea to international management needs" by Peter J. Auster; "Assessment of assessments" by Elva Escobar; and a joint presentation, "Benthic biogeographic provinces for the high seas" and "The relevance of biogeographic classification in areas beyond national jurisdiction", by Les Watling and Elva Escobar.

5. The presentations highlighted the advancement of scientific knowledge and the importance of continuing the quest to better understand the changes and processes in the marine environment, particularly in the deep sea, as well as the functional role played by vulnerable marine ecosystems and the interconnectedness of the various ecosystems. The need to bridge the gap between policy demands and scientific research was also underlined. Moreover, the presentations reinforced science as the sound basis for conducting assessments, including environmental impact assessments. It was explained that recent progress in biogeographic classification, which aims at understanding species distribution and the ways in which species populations are connected, could support decision-making with regard to spatial planning and other conservation and management measures, such as marine protected areas.

General considerations

6. It was recognized that the oceans and their resources played a key role in sustaining life on the planet and provided goods and services that benefited humankind. However, the oceans faced numerous and diverse pressures from human activities and there was growing evidence of the degradation of the ocean ecosystems and their biodiversity, including as a result of climate change. Those issues raised serious concerns for the international community and there was an urgent need to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

7. Since the 2006 meeting of the Working Group, some progress had been made at the global level. In particular, the international community had focused on the impacts of unsustainable and destructive fishing practices, including through General Assembly resolution 61/105, which aimed to address the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems, and through the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the development of international guidelines for the management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas and of an international legally binding regime on port State measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity, progress had also been made towards the development of scientific criteria for the identification of ecologically and biologically significant marine areas in need of protection, and on biogeographical classification systems. The Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area (ISBA/6/A/18, annex) and those under development by the International Seabed Authority on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area were also a welcome development with regard to the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the biodiversity of the Area.

8. Nevertheless, it was recognized that further efforts were needed in order to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction and achieve the goals set by the international community, including at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2005 World Summit.

9. It was recalled that all issues related to the oceans are interrelated and should be addressed in an interdisciplinary, intersectoral and comprehensive manner. It was reiterated that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea set out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and that any activities relating to marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction should be conducted in a manner consistent with the principles of international law, including the rights of coastal States over their extended continental shelves. A number of other conventions and instruments complement the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and together provide the current framework for activities relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The question of whether the current framework was adequate was a core issue before the Working Group.

10. The essential role of science in underpinning further efforts in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity was emphasized. Broad support was expressed in favour of further scientific research to continue improving our knowledge of ocean ecosystems and their biodiversity, particularly in certain areas still largely unexplored. It was recognized that building sound and objective

scientific advice was essential. An assessment of the state of the marine environment, on a global scale, to support decision-making and adaptive management, was considered desirable.

11. The need for increased capacity-building for developing States was highlighted under all agenda items. Efforts in that regard should aim at improving, inter alia, the capacity to participate in marine scientific research and benefit from its results; the capacity to implement legal instruments and enforce their provisions; and the capacity to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of a number of anthropogenic activities, including climate change, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and taking into account social and economic conditions and other relevant factors. The need for the transfer of relevant technologies was highlighted by many delegations.

The environmental impacts of anthropogenic activities on marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction

12. It was recognized that while our knowledge of ocean ecosystems and the impacts of anthropogenic activities thereon is continuously improving, efforts should be enhanced to increase the understanding of marine ecosystems and biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction and of the impacts of such activities, including cumulative impacts. It was also recognized that there was a need to ensure that all human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction were conducted in a sustainable manner, on the basis of the best available science and the precautionary and ecosystem approaches.

13. Anthropogenic impacts on marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction which were identified as requiring particular attention included the following: impacts caused by unsustainable fishing activities, including overfishing, overcapacity, by-catch, destructive fishing practices, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; non-participation and non-compliance with global and regional fisheries instruments; impacts of climate change, to which developing countries, especially the least developed and small island developing States, are particularly vulnerable; pollution from land and sea-based activities, including the dumping of toxic waste; the introduction of invasive alien species; the impacts of ocean noise; marine scientific research, including in relation to marine genetic resources; the exploration and exploitation of non-living resources; and the laying of pipelines. Attention was drawn to the progress that had been made and to ongoing activities within various forums to address some of those impacts.

14. Particular concerns were raised over new and emerging activities such as geo-engineering activities in the oceans. While recognizing the importance of environmentally sound climate change mitigation strategies, activities such as carbon sequestration and large-scale ocean iron fertilization raised particular concerns. The view was expressed that scientific understanding of the role of oceans in regulating climate as well as of the impacts of both climate change on the marine environment and the technologies used for climate mitigation purposes should be improved.

15. The urgent need to promote additional research and information sharing on new and emerging activities was expressed. At the same time, several delegations underlined that all activities on which insufficient scientific information was available should be regulated on the basis of the established principles of

international environmental law. Several delegations noted the need to enhance the implementation of existing instruments and to update the mandates of existing institutions to address new and emerging activities as a more desirable approach than developing new instruments and institutions.

16. It was pointed out that marine scientific research should be conducted in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and that the results of such research should be shared. It was also emphasized that scientific research activities should not cause damage to the marine environment and its resources. It was suggested that relevant intergovernmental organizations should work to that end, in particular the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Seabed Authority. Support was expressed for the promotion of voluntary codes of conduct and reference was made, in particular, to the InterRidge code developed by scientists to sustainably manage their research activities.

17. Several delegations supported the systematic application of environmental impact assessments in relation to existing and/or new activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, drawing, as appropriate, on existing practices and models for conducting them. Some delegations also referred to strategic environmental assessments. Provisions in international instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Convention on Biological Diversity, that provide for environmental impact assessments should be fully implemented. Regional and sectoral approaches to the assessments should also be supported. Several delegations stressed the need for capacity-building for developing countries in order to fully implement existing provisions on the assessments. Other delegations drew attention to the challenges and difficulties in carrying them out in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

18. As sectoral and regional approaches did not provide for the assessment of cumulative impacts of activities, some delegations suggested the development of global guidelines on environmental impact assessments, including identifying vulnerable marine ecosystems and preventing significant impacts thereon, regulating currently unregulated activities and addressing cumulative impacts across sectors. The approach provided in resolution 61/105 in relation to the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems was suggested by some delegations as a possible model. One delegation cautioned that prior impact assessments needed to be carefully balanced with the need to promote scientific research.

19. The need for regular scientific assessments of the state of the oceans on a global scale to support decision-making was underlined. It was noted that the report on the "assessment of assessments", the preparatory phase towards the establishment of a regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, would provide a valuable overview of available information on assessments of anthropogenic impacts of activities beyond national jurisdiction, including their cumulative effects, and might usefully inform the policy debate. It was noted by several delegations that the review of the above-mentioned report by the General Assembly provided an opportunity for the Assembly to discuss whether there was a need to develop existing processes, and if necessary establish new ones to assess the status of the marine environment. It was suggested by some delegations that the roles of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection and

the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO could also be enhanced in this area, for example to carry out targeted research for policymakers.

Coordination and cooperation among States as well as relevant intergovernmental organizations and bodies for the conservation and management of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction

20. Many delegations highlighted international cooperation and coordination as critical for addressing the challenges relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. That was particularly the case in the light of the multiple threats thereto and the wide range of relevant global and regional instruments and international organizations and bodies with predominantly sectoral mandates.

21. Some delegations expressed concern that the lack of coordination between and among the various sectoral actors was a hindrance to effective governance of activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Current arrangements tended to focus on assessing and mitigating the environmental impacts of specific activities rather than on the marine environment as a whole. Some delegations suggested that, while challenging, developing integrated ocean policies may offer a more effective framework for the protection of the marine environment.

22. It was recognized that greater cooperation and coordination was required among sectors and agencies addressing various uses of the oceans and their resources and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Cooperation and coordination at all levels and across all sectors was considered necessary for the full implementation of existing commitments. The importance of cooperation and coordination at the national level was particularly stressed.

23. The need for cooperation among States was also underlined. Several delegations emphasized that cross-sectoral capacity-building and technology transfer should be primary aspects of such cooperative efforts and highlighted their particular importance in the context of marine scientific research. Some delegations recognized that the Working Group provided an important forum for facilitating cooperation and coordination among States, as well as within and between global and regional organizations.

24. The importance of cooperation and coordination between intergovernmental organizations and bodies with varying competencies in areas beyond national jurisdiction was also emphasized, in particular cooperation among regional fisheries management organizations and between those organizations and non-fisheries organizations. Recent examples of such cooperation have included cooperation among the tuna regional fisheries management organizations and between the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission. The importance of cooperation between relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes through the UN-Oceans coordination mechanism was also mentioned. Some delegations expressed the view that the role and functions of UN-Oceans were not well understood, and that its visibility should be enhanced.

25. Different views were expressed on ways and means to facilitate cooperation and coordination. Several delegations supported the need for a new mechanism in the medium term, while suggesting for the short term practical measures for

addressing current gaps in coordination and organized cooperation between relevant global and regional organizations and bodies. Other delegations stressed that no new structures or mechanisms were needed and pointed out the steps undertaken to improve the existing framework to address various challenges, inter alia, by incorporating ecosystem and precautionary approaches and through joint meetings and initiatives of relevant organizations. These delegations also noted the increased costs and difficulties that would be inherent in creating new institutions or mechanisms. Some delegations were of the view that the establishment of new structures should be considered only after having exhausted all possibilities for improving the performance of existing institutions within their mandates.

The role of area-based management tools

26. Area-based management tools are essential and effective tools in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Several delegations highlighted the importance of the tools, including marine protected areas, in the implementation of ecosystem and precautionary approaches to the management of human activities in the oceans and in addressing threats to marine ecosystems in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It was emphasized, however, that marine protected areas were only one of the several available tools and needed to be consistent with international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

27. Some delegations stressed the need to accelerate progress towards achieving the commitments of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation) to establish marine protected areas, including representative networks, by 2012. To that end, coastal States were encouraged to take measures to protect ecologically or biologically significant areas within areas of national jurisdiction. Several delegations called for efforts towards establishing marine protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

28. Reference was made to the progress that had been made to implement area-based management tools beyond areas of national jurisdiction, for example, by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Seabed Authority, regional fisheries management organizations and regional environmental bodies. The importance of continued progress was underlined. Others noted that a more comprehensive and integrated approach to the establishment and management of area-based management tools was needed. Some emphasized the need for a multilateral mechanism to identify areas in need of protection in areas beyond national jurisdiction, and for a coordinated approach in the establishment of a network of marine protected areas in those areas.

29. Support was expressed for the scientific criteria for the identification of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection developed in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Several delegations suggested the need for further work on the application of those criteria and the use of biogeographical classification in respect of areas beyond national jurisdiction. It was considered that the General Assembly was the appropriate forum for such discussions, including consideration of issues in relation to the designation of applicable measures, the development of management objectives, monitoring and enforcement. Several delegations proposed building a register of areas that would meet the criteria. Some delegations also suggested the development of a joint

approach and guidance on the application of criteria for the identification of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas in need of protection beyond areas of national jurisdiction, in accordance with international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. For example, that task could be carried out through the establishment of a liaison group comprised of relevant organizations, including FAO, IMO and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and facilitated by the United Nations.

30. Some delegations argued that progress needed to be made within existing regional and sectoral bodies towards the identification and designation of areas in need of protection. International organizations, including IMO, the International Seabed Authority, regional fisheries management organizations and regional seas conventions and environmental bodies all had an important role in that regard. Some support was also expressed for the establishment of pilot multi-purpose marine protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction, in accordance with international law and based on international consensus.

31. However, some delegations stressed that it was also important to recognize regional differences and the need to develop area-based management tools on a case-by-case basis, based on the best available scientific information, taking into account the purpose of the area-based management tool and the specific ecological and biological features of the area. The view was expressed that marine protected areas needed to have clearly delineated impact areas and a strong causal link between the management measures and the harm being addressed, and that enforcement measures needed to be consistent with international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction

32. Delegations agreed that marine genetic resources provided important ecosystems goods and services to humankind. Therefore, ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction was essential.

33. The importance of promoting scientific research on marine genetic resources was recognized in the light of its benefits in terms of expanding knowledge of the biodiversity of the oceans, as well as in discovering new substances of benefit to the livelihood and well-being of humankind. Such research should be undertaken, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, on marine scientific research and on the basis of the precautionary approach, in particular to ensure that extraction activities are undertaken in a sustainable manner. Several delegations welcomed progress in the development of self-regulatory mechanisms by the scientific community, such as codes of conduct. Reference was also made to the possibility of using environmental impact assessments in relation to such activities, and developing international standards and guidelines to that end.

34. Some delegations suggested a number of areas for further research. They included the relationship between marine genetic resources and other resources; the level of activity actually occurring in respect of marine genetic resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction and the costs and risks involved; the marine biotechnology development process and the benefits arising from the commercialization of marine genetic resources; and the mapping of species and areas of potential interest for biotechnological application with a view to identifying

appropriate measures for conservation and sustainable use. A step-by-step approach was proposed for the development of scientific research for biotechnological applications, which included the establishment of mechanisms to improve inventories of biodiversity at different scales, the establishment of alliances among research groups and the analysis of the biological, human and economic potential of such resources, as well as the establishment of programmes to monitor the use of harvested resources.

35. The need for capacity-building for developing countries to participate in, and to benefit from, activities related to marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction was underlined, as was the need to enhance the sharing of scientific information and results. In that regard, reference was made to the usefulness of the International Seabed Authority Endowment Fund.

36. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was recognized as the legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas, including in respect of genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In that regard, divergent views were expressed on the relevant legal regime on marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction, in particular whether those marine genetic resources were part of the common heritage of mankind and therefore fell under the regime for the Area, or were part of the regime for the high seas.

37. Notwithstanding the above, some delegations were of the view that an elaborated regime was needed within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in relation to marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In response, other delegations stated that a new international regime was not warranted. They noted that any such regime might impede scientific research and innovation and would be difficult to monitor and enforce. Several delegations highlighted the need for further consideration of intellectual property rights relating to marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

38. In that context, some delegations proposed focusing on practical measures to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of marine genetic resources. It was proposed that such practical measures could address, among others, options for benefit-sharing. In that regard, several delegations expressed interest in considering a proposal to use the multilateral system developed under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as a possible reference point for the discussions. While open to considering practical measures, others underlined the importance of also continuing the discussions on the legal regime on marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

39. Several delegations expressed support for the continuation of discussions on marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction under the authority of the General Assembly and within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Reference was also made to the need to take into account the work under other relevant forums, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Trade Organization.

Whether there is a governance or regulatory gap, and if so, how it should be addressed

40. Delegations generally recognized that there were implementation gaps in the international legal framework and emphasized the need for full and effective implementation of existing instruments, including available principles and tools, and for the strengthening of existing institutions and arrangements and enhanced cooperation and coordination. Specific issues raised in this context included improved flag State control, developing port State control and market measures, performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations, increased coverage of regional arrangements in terms of geographical scope and species, as necessary, and the need to implement resolution 61/105 with respect to the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems. A view was expressed that the mandate of regional fisheries management organizations should not extend beyond fisheries management.

41. In the above context, several delegations emphasized that capacity-building and technology transfer were at the centre of efforts to address implementation gaps, and encouraged the strengthening of capacity-building activities and highlighted the need to foster scientific cooperation and multidisciplinary research efforts and partnerships with developing States.

42. Divergent views were expressed on the existence of regulatory or governance gaps. Several delegations identified specific regulatory gaps, including gaps in the geographic coverage of legally binding instruments that provided for integrated management of the various ocean-based human activities, such as fisheries and biodiversity conservation, and gaps in addressing existing, new and emerging activities as well as threats that were currently unregulated or insufficiently regulated.

43. Several delegations identified governance gaps arising from the absence of institutions or mechanisms at the global, regional and subregional levels and from inadequate mandates of existing organizations and mechanisms. Specific governance gaps that were identified included the insufficient development of modern management tools and lack of coherent application of international principles, rules or standards; the need for further mechanisms to ensure cooperation and coordination within and across sectors, States and institutions; and the absence of any institution or mechanisms to assess and address cumulative environmental impacts of existing and emerging activities, review the implementation of management measures and ensure effective compliance and enforcement.

44. Several delegations favoured a "tool-box" approach that could provide a range of short-, medium- and long-term responses. It was suggested that progress could be achieved in the short term on various fronts, while discussions continued on more long-term comprehensive solutions.

45. Several delegations agreed that short-term measures included improving implementation and enforcement of existing instruments and working towards full participation in relevant international instruments. Delegations also emphasized the need to improve the capacity of developing States, including through transfer of technology and scientific cooperation, and the sharing of experience on the governance of marine affairs. Some delegations also referred to the need for increased funding for research in areas beyond national jurisdiction and for

coordinated scientific advice to provide existing regulatory bodies with a common scientific basis for decision-making.

46. Other short-term proposals that were suggested related to environmental impact assessments in areas beyond national jurisdiction; the establishment of marine protected areas in those areas; the sharing of information on marine scientific research; and the sharing of information and knowledge on marine genetic resources and the benefits that arise from their commercial use.

47. In regard to medium- or long-term approaches, divergent views were expressed. Several delegations considered that an implementation agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was the most effective way to establish an integrated regime and address the multiplicity of challenges facing the protection and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Those delegations suggested that such an instrument was necessary to fill the governance and regulatory gaps that prevented the international community from adequately protecting marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It was proposed that such an instrument would address currently unregulated activities, ensure consistent application of modern ocean governance principles in sectoral management regimes and provide for enhanced international cooperation.

48. Other delegations were not convinced of the need for an implementing agreement and expressed the view that activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction were either appropriately regulated under existing institutions and processes, or could be better regulated through the existing instruments and institutions and by enhancing cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation. These delegations emphasized that efforts should be focused on implementing and complying with existing instruments, enhancing existing mechanisms, improving cooperation and coordination and strengthening the capacity of developing States.

Other matters

49. Many delegations reiterated the central role of the General Assembly in discussing issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In that regard, broad support was expressed for the continuation of the Working Group in order to make further progress on those issues.

50. Different views were expressed, however, on whether the Working Group should be formalized or remain ad hoc and informal, on the frequency with which its meetings should occur and on whether it should be given the mandate to make recommendations to the Assembly.

51. It was emphasized that, should the Working Group be reconvened, its mandate should be more focused. Possible areas for future discussions were proposed, including the following: implementation and enforcement of existing instruments designed to protect the marine environment in areas beyond national jurisdiction, identification of issues to be addressed and means to develop an integrated approach; legal issues pertaining to marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; development of practical measures for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction; application of spatial management; the establishment of marine protected areas; the development

of guidance for the application of environmental impact assessments; practical options for access to and sharing of the benefits from genetic resources in and from areas beyond national jurisdiction; and addressing information gaps.

52. Some delegations raised the possible budgetary implications of holding a meeting of the Working Group in 2009. Other delegations noted that the question of holding a meeting would be considered by the Assembly at its sixty-third session. Some delegations also noted the need to renew the mandate of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea during the sixty-third session of the Assembly.

Concluding remarks by the Co-Chairpersons

53. Based on their assessment of the dynamic discussions that have taken place during the meeting and the progress achieved, the Co-Chairpersons consider that there is a need for ongoing consideration by the General Assembly of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, and in particular within the framework of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

54. During the meeting a number of proposals were made to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the short, medium and longer term. Based on the discussions, the Assembly may wish to consider referring the following issues to the Working Group:

(a) More effective implementation and enforcement of existing instruments relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction;

(b) The strengthening of cooperation and coordination at all levels and across all sectors, including enhanced cooperation in capacity-building for developing countries;

(c) The development and implementation of effective environmental impact assessments as a tool for improving ocean management;

(d) Development and use of area-based management tools, including designation, management, monitoring and enforcement, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;

(e) Practical measures to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine genetic resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction, without prejudice to ongoing discussions on the relevant legal regime on marine genetic resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction;

(f) Continuing and enhanced marine scientific research in relation to marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

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Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and the preparation of the 2008 Review Conference

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2008
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda**
Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (New York, 14 April 2008)

I. Introduction

1. The special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was held on 14 April 2008. The overall theme of the meeting was "Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, including new challenges and emerging issues".

2. The 2008 meeting was preceded by extensive consultations within the Economic and Social Council, and between the President and members of the Bureau of the Council and the management of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD, and meetings with members of the executive boards of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and members of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board. In the course of those consultations and meetings, the agenda and the format of the special high-level meeting were discussed and agreed upon.

3. The five sub-themes that had been selected to serve as the focus of substantive discussions in three parallel round tables and two consecutive thematic debates which were held during the meeting were: (a) new initiatives on financing for development; (b) supporting development efforts and enhancing the role of middle-

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income countries, including in the area of trade; (c) supporting development efforts of the least developed countries, including through trade capacity-building; (d) building and sustaining solid financial markets: challenges for international cooperation; and (e) financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The meeting had before it a note by the Secretary-General (E/2008/7) which provided background information and suggested possible questions on each of the five sub-themes.

4. The meeting featured a brief opening plenary, which included statements by the President of the Economic and Social Council, Léo Mérorès (Haiti); the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon; the President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, Petko Draganov; Ricardo Ochoa, speaking on behalf of the Chairman of the World Bank/IMF Development Committee; the Deputy Managing Director of IMF, Murilo Portugal; and the Director for External Relations of the World Trade Organization, Willy Alfaro. The opening plenary culminated with a presentation by Zia Qureshi, Senior Adviser to the Chief Economist of the World Bank and lead author of *Global Monitoring Report 2008*,[1] focusing on the current state and prospects for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

5. The opening plenary was followed by the three round tables, which allowed for a free-flowing discussion among the participants. The co-chairs and lead discussants of the round tables were as follows:

Round table A: Marc Bichler, Director for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Luxembourg), and Chair, United Nations Advisers Group on Inclusive Financial Sectors, and Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, as co-chairs, with Philippe Douste-Blazy, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Innovative Financing for Development, and Chair, Executive Board, UNITAID, as lead discussant

Round table B: Marisol Argueta de Barillas, Minister for Foreign Affairs (El Salvador), and Juan Pablo de Laiglesia, Director, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Spain), as co-chairs, with Lakshmi Puri, Acting Deputy Secretary-General and Director, Division on International Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities, UNCTAD, as lead discussant

Round table C: Ismat Jahan, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, and Håkon A. Gulbrandsen, State Secretary for International Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Norway), as co-chairs, with Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, United Nations, as lead discussant

6. The afternoon session featured, consecutively, the thematic debate on building and sustaining solid financial markets: challenges for international cooperation, and a special event on financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Each of the debates began with keynote presentations followed by an informal interactive dialogue among all participants.

[1] *Global Monitoring Report 2008: MDGs and the Environment — Agenda for Inclusive and Sustainable Development* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2008).

7. Speakers during the thematic debate were Joaquín Almunia, European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs; Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; and Christopher Towe, Deputy Director, Monetary and Capital Markets Department, IMF. During the special event on financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation, the meeting heard presentations by Olav Kjørven, Assistant Administrator for Development Policy, UNDP; Tariq Banuri, Stockholm Environment Institute; and Lucio Monari, World Bank Vice-Presidency for Sustainable Development.

8. The 2008 meeting had a significant number of participating executive and alternate directors of the Boards of the World Bank and IMF. Other participants included ministers, vice-ministers and other high-level national officials in the areas of finance, foreign affairs and development cooperation, as well as senior representatives of United Nations organizations and other international organizations (see E/2008/INF/1). Representatives of non-governmental organizations and the business sector also participated actively in the plenary meetings, round tables and thematic debates.

9. The opening statements referred to several critical issues in the current juncture. Most countries and the international community were confronting unusual challenges. The economic and development outlook was worrying. Global financial instability had increased and world output growth was decelerating substantially. Food and energy prices in international markets had risen considerably. Policymakers in developed countries were trying to restore stability in financial markets and avoid a prolonged slowdown in an environment characterized by unusual uncertainty. In many developing countries, the rise in food prices was causing serious disturbances and even riots. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions had an important role to play in assisting in solving such problems.

10. The present special high-level meeting was especially important since in seven months world leaders would meet in Doha to deal with the review of the Monterrey Consensus[2] and the themes chosen for this meeting were particularly relevant for the November-December 2008 conference. In the meantime, the twelfth session of UNCTAD would be held in Accra from 20 to 25 April 2008, addressing key development issues related to financing for development; States members of the United Nations and other stakeholders would meet in New York in July 2008, in the context of the Development Cooperation Forum, to address aid-related issues; and from 2 to 4 September 2008, countries and multilateral institutions would gather at the Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. The outcomes of these three events were expected to constitute substantive inputs to the Doha conference.

11. In the opening statements, it was also stressed that a positive outcome in the multilateral trade negotiations, a major policy objective in the Monterrey Consensus, could give a significant boost to the world economy at a critical moment. The success of the Doha Round was more important than ever: this was in fact the greatest challenge that the World Trade Organization had faced. The

[2] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

obstacles were more political than technical and with the necessary flexibility exhibited by all partners, agreement was within reach before the end of 2008.

12. Regarding the food crisis, as indicated in the concluding remarks at the meeting, the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council, the Council at large and the Secretary-General will explore what steps could be taken towards a prompt global response to this issue. What follows is a summary of the deliberations on each of the themes agreed for consideration at the special high-level meeting.

II. New initiatives on financing for development

13. Many representatives pointed out that new initiatives on financing for development were important as regards achieving the objectives of the Monterrey Consensus. Official development assistance (ODA) was hovering around $100 billion and only five Development Assistance Committee (DAC)/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members — Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden — had met the United Nations aid target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. It was uncertain whether the commitment of the Gleneagles Summit to reach $130 billion in 2010 would be attained. Yet, donor countries should fully honour the aid commitments made at Monterrey and Gleneagles. At present, the need for further resources was evident. The fulfilment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, as well as resources needed for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and for facing the energy and food crisis simultaneously required vast additional flows.

14. According to some speakers, support for a number of "innovative sources of finance", a tool suggested in the Monterrey Consensus, was gathering momentum. Several initiatives were being implemented and others continued to be explored or were at an initial stage. An air ticket levy and the International Finance Facility for Immunization had raised $300 million in 2007 and a total of $500 million was expected in 2008. The resources were being disbursed through multilateral institutions to fight pandemics among the poorest in developing countries. In the same vein, the project on Advanced Market Commitments for vaccines had also started.

15. Several participants welcomed the above developments, particularly since they viewed the funds involved as additional and often more predictable than ODA. The innovative sources had become an effective tool in development cooperation, and should be presented as such in the Doha conference. They were not a substitute for, nor should they be counted as, ODA. It was crucial to enhance the information channels regarding existing initiatives and new efforts, since this was central to encouraging new countries and other actors to enter the field. The United Nations should play a greater role in the information efforts. Many speakers noted that these new initiatives should not be burdensome for developing countries and that their impact should be thoroughly examined. It was important that efforts in this area not be scattered too widely and that the resources mobilized be distributed in a transparent fashion, preferably using traditional aid distribution mechanisms.

16. Many representatives referred to various new initiatives in the area of innovative sources of finance. The initiatives mentioned covered a vast range and included: the currency transactions tax; revenues from carbon emissions trading; use

of remittances for development purposes; repatriation of illicit funds; global lotteries; the financial transactions tax; issue of special drawing rights (SDRs); channelling resources from sovereign wealth funds to developing countries for development purposes; and the debt-for-equity initiative. At the local level, further development of microfinance with the support of donor countries, including through the European microfinance platform, also seemed particularly important. Some stressed the need for the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to be fully respected by all partners in the implementation of such initiatives.

17. It was noted that even a very low currency transaction tax (one half of 1 per cent of one basis point) would yield billions of dollars annually. Furthermore, it would help to mitigate volatility in international financial markets. In respect of remittances, France was introducing a "co-development policy" to make transfer of funds by migrants available for long-term economic purposes in Africa. The co-development strategy involved tax concessions and cooperation between receiving countries and the source country, including banks. Spain was developing a project along similar lines for the productive use of migrant resources in Latin America. Regarding SDRs, two proposals were advanced: issuing SDRs periodically to finance development and issuing SDRs for confronting severe liquidity problems in developing countries. With respect to sovereign wealth funds, several participants supported the initiative of the President of the World Bank in respect of creating equity investment platforms and benchmarks to secure the allocation of 1 per cent of the assets of sovereign wealth funds as investments in infrastructure in Africa.

III. Supporting development efforts and enhancing the role of middle-income countries, including in the area of trade

18. Many representatives stated that middle-income countries had common needs and that enhancing international cooperation efforts to support their development was essential. Middle-income countries needed to reduce their financial vulnerability and develop solid and inclusive domestic financial markets. They needed to accelerate technological development so as to be able to compete while paying higher wages than low-income countries. It was vital to strengthen their institutions and consolidate national capacities while improving physical infrastructure. It was important to enhance policymaking on the basis of improved statistical data. It was critical to ensure an effective and efficient tax system, one leading to an increase in revenues which would allow for strengthened policies for social protection and poverty reduction. Middle-income countries needed to prevent capital flight, and to counter abuse and evasion engaged in through transfer prices and tax havens.

19. A number of participants noted that, while middle-income countries had many needs in common, they were nonetheless heterogeneous and required customized solutions and instruments. For example, some of those countries were prone to macroeconomic instability and largely depended on commodity markets. A considerable number of them had substantial pockets of poverty. Several among them, albeit still a minority, had significant access to international financial markets. In the last 25 years, output growth and export performance of middle-income countries had been quite uneven. A large number, but not all, had experienced serious financial and debt crises. Some relied on tourism and exports of services

which made them vulnerable to income fluctuations in developed countries. Many of these countries were islands likely to be severely affected by climate change.

20. According to several speakers, international support for the development efforts of these countries was particularly important with respect to preventing regression and speeding up poverty eradication programmes. There were a number of areas in which the collaboration of multilateral institutions — in particular the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization — and developed countries could be particularly effective. These areas included science and technology development, improved market access, enhancing infrastructure investments, aid for trade, investment promotion of small and medium-size enterprises, transfer of clean technology, energy conservation and investments in new energy sources, and enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation. Vigorous proactive cooperation policies in these areas would help middle-income countries to realize their potential.

21. Many representatives stated that it was important that developed countries and multilateral institutions consider innovative approaches to supporting development efforts of the middle-income countries, which received only small amounts of ODA. It seemed necessary not to focus exclusively on gross domestic product (GDP) when considering criteria for providing assistance to these countries. Additional ODA as well as flexible policies of donors and multilateral institutions could significantly enhance key development programmes and poverty eradication projects in the middle-income countries.

22. Some speakers underlined that not only efforts to eliminate corruption but good governance in all its dimensions was necessary for sustainable development. Two components were particularly important: public policies to achieve equitable distribution of benefits, and measures leading to the empowerment of women and their full participation in economic activity.

23. Several discussants pointed out that given the aggregate size of the population and the GDP of middle-income countries, their representation in international rule-making and standard- and norm-setting should be increased. It was noted that the voting power of these countries and of developing countries as a whole had been recently increased in IMF. Moreover, the members of the Fund had agreed to revise the quota every five years.

24. A number of speakers stressed the importance of remaining vigilant regarding trade barriers. The recent rise in protectionism was alarming. A breakthrough in the multilateral trade negotiations was essential, particularly as open investment and trade policies would lead to accelerating economic growth in middle-income countries. At the same time, risk mitigation and public/private partnerships could be instrumental in promoting investments, including in infrastructure. Still, at the domestic level, it was critical to enhance education, since upgrading technology so as to compete internationally required high-skilled people.

25. Some representatives stated that there was a need to revise economic models, since the market model alone might not be suitable for the development of middle-income countries. It was noted that promoting a code of conduct for transnational corporations was necessary, particularly in the case of extractive industries, so as to provide native people with a minimum income. Also, greater accountability of lenders and borrowers was required to avert new debt crises.

26. It was noted that an international forum within which to discuss issues related to middle-income countries and articulate a plan for collective action designed to support their development efforts was desirable. Numerous delegates expressed their belief in the need for a mandate within the United Nations to meet the challenges of the middle-income countries. These countries were partners in development. They could also be instrumental, through South-South and triangular cooperation, in assisting development in lower-income countries. It was stated that middle-income countries as a group should be better organized and that multilateral development institutions should pay more attention to their needs. Moreover, the creation of a United Nations agency or office charged with taking up issues and concerns of middle-income countries should be considered.

27. Several representatives called attention to the Namibia conference on the middle-income countries to be held possibly later in 2008. Initial preparations were already under way. The Namibia conference would offer an important opportunity to reaffirm and consolidate the progress made in the Intergovernmental Conference on Middle-Income Countries, sponsored by the Government of Spain and held in Madrid on 1 and 2 March 2007 (see A/62/71-E/2007/46, annex for a summary of the proceedings), and the Second International Conference on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries, sponsored by the Government of El Salvador and held in that country on 3 and 4 October 2007 (see A/62/483-E/2007/90 for the Consensus of El Salvador and the executive summary). The Namibia conference would also solidify the recognition of the Madrid and El Salvador Conferences within the United Nations system and, through its own outcome, feed into the financing for development process leading towards the Doha conference.

IV. Supporting development efforts of the least developed countries, including through trade capacity-building

28. Many speakers underscored the fact that while the least developed countries had experienced progress in the current decade, the current economic juncture was particularly challenging for them. High food and energy prices made more difficult the efforts to address long-standing problems: inadequate economic structures, precarious social development and a fragile physical environment. Least Developed Countries were unlikely to attain the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, it appeared improbable that the goals of the Programme of Action[3] for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 would be met. Moreover, several of the least developed countries were post-conflict countries where strenuous domestic efforts as well as special assistance were required to restore social cohesion and the economic growth impetus.

29. In the view of a substantial number of participants, a new impetus for the development of agriculture was important, as well as increasing attention to the expansion of agribusiness in those countries. The support of donors and international institutions was necessary to enhance their food production as a matter of urgency. The response of the World Bank, which had considered short-term and long-term measures to cope with the current food problem, was a valuable step forward. In fact, the Bank was addressing not only immediate needs but also food

[3] A/CONF.191/13, chap. II.

security in the long run and the requirements for effective safety nets in this difficult current period and beyond. In the short run, it was critical that food aid to many Least Developed Countries be increased as a matter of urgency.

30. Numerous representatives emphasized the role of international trade in economic growth and modernization. It was important that Least Developed Countries integrate trade policies into their national development strategies. The multilateral trading system had much to offer to Least Developed Countries, particularly if an adequate business environment prevailed in those countries. In such a climate, exports could expand and employment prospects would improve, with a positive impact on poverty alleviation. A friendly business environment would also attract foreign direct investment (FDI). It was the view of several representatives that, although Least Developed Countries had undergone a period of liberalization, this had not translated into much higher rates of economic growth. In the meantime, they had to confront substantial barriers protecting agricultural production in developed countries.

31. Various speakers called for duty-free and quota-free access for all exports of least developed countries to developed countries. Yet, market access was not enough. It was essential to expand the export capacity and competitiveness of these countries. Building adequate trade capacities required action on several fronts: policies to enhance the business environment, human resource development, adequate infrastructure, productive investment, and the requisite financing. Moreover, market access had to be predictable. Many representatives stressed that Aid for Trade was crucial and that it should be scaled up.

32. Several participants underlined the role of Aid for Trade and the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Assistance to Least Developed Countries — which included areas such as trade facilitation, environment and labour regulations — in respect of their taking full advantage of trade opportunities. This was even more important if the current multilateral trade negotiations led to an agreement that included full implementation of the Doha Development Agenda. Some stressed the vital role of physical infrastructure, in particular the provision of electricity, as an erratic electricity supply could cause severe disruption of many industrial activities. Together with improved transport and communications, reliable energy supplies were critical for a dynamic export sector. It was suggested that ODA could be redirected to these areas. Also, several participants underscored that developed countries were failing to deliver ODA for least developed countries at a level commensurate with long-standing aid commitments. It was stressed that resources for Aid for Trade should be additional and should not be linked to ongoing trade negotiations.

33. Most least developed countries were small economies. It was pointed out that regional economic integration would facilitate their taking advantage of economies of scale and would help these countries integrate into the world economy. It would provide the opportunity to diversify and enhance the manufacturing sector, which was a strategic objective in countries dependent on primary commodity exports. More generally, broad South-South cooperation — encompassing trade, monetary, financial and technical assistance and including triangular cooperation — could be particularly beneficial for these countries.

34. A number of representatives stressed the need to foster small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa. Governments, assisted by multilateral development

institutions, could promote the development of this sector. Such development was one of the foundations for the flourishing of the private sector and deserved attention. It was noted also that, for a substantial number of least developed countries, remittances from migrant workers played a significant role in the economy even if the bulk went to private consumption. It was important to consider exploring ways to orient such resources towards productive investments, including through the collaboration of the members of a country's professional diaspora. The World Bank could help in achieving that task. Some participants pointed out that, while it was appropriate to consider policies designed to enhance the development impact of remittances in receiving countries, the flow of remittances, inasmuch as they were basically international transfers of individual labour earnings, should not itself be a substitute for development assistance.

35. Several participants highlighted the fact that country ownership was indispensable for adequate implementation of policies and programmes. An explicit national development strategy could assist in strengthening ownership by identifying policy priorities, their sequencing and respective instruments — including financing. In particular, poverty reduction strategy papers should be negotiated locally with a wide range of stakeholders, and should include parliamentary oversight. For many least developed countries, public sector reform was particularly important, as was enhancing the tax system, in particular so as to curtail evasion. Gender equality and an active role of civil society were also highlighted by some speakers. According to several participants, measures to prevent corruption, reduce flight capital and eliminate illicit transfers were also necessary in a number of these countries, as were efforts to recover the illegally acquired funds deposited abroad. Regarding the latter, the launching of the joint United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-World Bank Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative was a very important step. Also, it was noted that Norway had established a task force on curbing capital flight and illicit transfers.

36. Numerous speakers stressed that the key to effectively addressing the challenges described above lay in Governments' mustering the political will to reform and the international community's effective support of the reform efforts. The Doha conference in late 2008 would provide the opportunity for all relevant actors to show their commitment.

V. Building and sustaining solid financial markets: challenges for international cooperation

37. To a large extent, discussants focused their presentations on the current financial turmoil, which had originated in the United States of America but whose reverberations were being felt in all regions of the world. After years of relatively easy access to liquidity and virtually unconstrained leverage, the global financial system was now firmly in the grip of a de-leveraging process accompanied by considerable financial turbulence. Reasonable financial stability could be achieved only when investor confidence had been restored. In the meantime, the de-leveraging process was leading to enormous losses. The potential financial losses had been estimated to be close to $1 trillion and were not confined only to the sub-prime mortgage market. The turmoil was affecting other financial markets in the United States and virtually every other country. A global turmoil required a global

response. While instability had decreased somewhat after actions by large industrialized economies, longer-term stability remained a major challenge. The systemic nature of that challenge made this issue a key consideration on the road to Doha.

38. It was noted that countries in Eastern Europe were being adversely affected by the financial turbulence as spreads had increased significantly. Most developing countries had been largely insulated from the current turmoil. This did not imply decoupling from industrialized economies, since globalization remained strong and there would be some significant deceleration of the robust growth pace of previous years. Besides, many food- and energy-importing developing countries would face severe difficulties as a consequence of the escalation in the prices of those goods.

39. According to the discussants, there had been a convergence of views on the origins and causes of the crisis. The widespread loss of confidence in financial markets after the explosion of the price bubble in the housing market had been due to several factors: lack of market transparency; gaps in the prudential framework; inadequate risk management and risk measurement in key financial institutions; and concerns about the so-called non-organized markets and the role of credit agencies. The policy response to the turbulence in financial markets in the United States had focused on averting a credit crunch and had consisted mainly of strong support to inter-bank markets, enhanced bank disclosure, bank recapitalization and supervisory actions to deal with stressed institutions and the stocks of impaired assets. In October 2007, the European Union (EU) Finance Ministries had also identified four key actions to deal with the financial turmoil: improving financial transparency, particularly of banks; upgrading valuation standards, especially illiquid instruments; strengthening the prudential framework for the banking sector; and investigation of structural market issues, such as the role played by credit rating agencies and the risks involved in the new forms of securitization.

40. It was pointed out that at the recent Spring Meeting of the IMF International Monetary and Financial Committee, the approaches described above had been reaffirmed by the Finance Ministers. The Committee had also endorsed the recommendations for future actions contained in the report of the Financial Stability Forum. Indeed, in the medium term, the weaknesses of the financial system had to be addressed at a fundamental level and in this regard, the report provided guidelines for action in all key areas.

41. It was further noted that while every country had the right to tailor its policy response to its own specificities and institutional setting, a decision to "go at it alone" would be a mistake for various reasons: (a) it would imply ignoring the reality of globalized financial markets where differences in market regulation and oversight could create competitive distortions and the opportunity for inadequate regulatory arbitrage; (b) the country would miss the opportunity to learn from policymakers in other parts of the world, particularly with respect to how markets work and respond under stress; (c) financial markets reacted more favourably when authorities acted in concert. The current turmoil offered an opportunity to forge a new common approach; it was important not to let this opportunity to reform the international financial architecture slip by. Here was also an opportunity to strengthen IMF through that institution's playing a leadership role in the resolution of the confidence crisis.

42. There was a convergence of views among discussants with respect to the fact that a coordinated long-term response to global financial instability was essential. It was pointed out that emerging markets should be included in the collaborative approach to that response. Regarding future actions, the policy response should include, inter alia, reinforcing credit discipline, tightening regulation of and oversight over mortgage originators, stricter application of consolidated supervision, improvement of liquidity risk management and strengthening cross-border supervisory cooperation. Moreover, it was stressed that large and persistent global imbalances also involved serious risks for financial stability and should continue to be at the top of the international policy agenda.

43. It was pointed out that lessons from the past had shown that financial liberalization, and particularly an imprudent opening of the capital account by developing countries, undermined many policies designed to advance economic growth and avoid crises. Also, liberalization made macroeconomic management and the implementation of counter-cyclical policies more difficult. To effectively support economic growth in developing countries, a number of international cooperation policies related to the financing for development process seemed critical. These would entail: (a) strengthening crisis prevention; (b) enhancing crisis management mechanisms; (c) expanding development finance; (d) more equitable governance of international financial institutions; (e) effective ownership and adequate policy space; and (f) increased regional monetary and financial cooperation.

44. Numerous representatives stressed that a smooth functioning of the financial markets was a precondition for sustainable growth, higher standards of living and economic and social progress. Yet, the ongoing financial turmoil had uncovered serious weaknesses in the existing international financial architecture. Two considerations appeared particularly important in strengthening crisis prevention: (a) since constant financial innovation was presenting a major challenge in terms of translating risk analysis into policy action, it was necessary to enhance capital and disclosure requirements and promote stronger market discipline; (b) there was a need for increasing early warning capabilities, including a strengthening of the role of IMF in oversight of macrofinancial stability. Regarding regulatory cooperation, inter-country dialogues as well as meetings in international forums, such as the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, could be improved by making them more consistent, cooperative and reactive. Regarding that issue, some participants noted the scant role played by IMF, an institution with broad membership. Most of the dialogue took place in, and most of the recommendations emerged from, meetings of a limited group of countries or institutions such as the Basel Committee which were hardly representative of the whole international community. It was also noted that IMF had warned of the looming financial crisis but did not have effective tools for influencing its members as regards reorienting their policies.

45. Many delegates stated that the reform of the international financial architecture was essential. A key issue was the legitimacy and credibility of the Bretton Woods institutions. The agreement reached in the Spring Meeting of the International Monetary and Financial Committee, which would increase the voting power of developing countries, had been a positive step in this direction. Also, it appeared crucial to support the IMF Medium-term Strategy which included an important and valuable role for the Fund in low-income countries.

46. Some participants stressed that the central challenge was to make the international financial system work for development. This required equitable representation of developing countries in economic decision-making bodies. The recent agreement in the International Monetary and Financial Committee regarding the voting power of developing in countries IMF was clearly insufficient. To build and sustain solid financial markets, it was imperative to address effectively the systemic issues that had contributed to the financial crisis. The growing importance of instruments such as hedge funds and private equity funds posed a significant threat to financial stability. Notwithstanding, the international financial system lacked supervisory bodies able to control complex instruments and most derivatives. Moreover, unregulated offshore centres and tax havens facilitated capital flight and tax evasion. It was necessary to combat capital flight and transfer of funds. One key measure would be to upgrade the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into an intergovernmental entity. Its agenda should contemplate the inclusion of measures devised to combat tax evasion and illicit capital flight. In the longer run, a world tax cooperation organization could be considered. Also, it was important to consider the creation of a committee on financing for development, or a similar body, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the dialogues of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization on an integrated review of the six areas of the Monterrey Consensus.

47. A number of speakers pointed out that financial liberalization should be a prudent and gradual process. Some were of the view that liberalization of capital flows had resulted in considerable gains for developing countries and had helped development. Still, enhancing supervision and prudential regulation were crucial to ensuring more permanent benefits. Indeed, both enhanced regulation and supervision were critical as developing countries moved further into securitization.

VI. Financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation

48. In the introductory remarks by discussants, it was pointed out that climate change posed an enormous challenge and that confronting that challenge was a major obligation of the international community. Its disproportionate impact on the world's poorest citizen could erode gains that had accrued over generations. For the 2.6 billion people in the world who were living on less than $2 a day, representing some 40 per cent of the world's population, climate change presented a significant threat and in this regard, inaction could endanger significantly the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. Yet, confronting this severe problem could also offer an opportunity to address in a comprehensive manner long-standing developmental problems.

49. It was noted that some of the early impacts of global warming in several areas that were of relevance to human development had already become manifest. An increased exposure to drought, changed rainfall patterns and increased temperature could reduce productivity in agriculture and thereby affect the world's food supply. Changes in climate would dramatically change patterns of water distribution and the sustainability of water systems. Climate variability and change might cause death and disease through natural disasters, such as heatwaves, floods and droughts. In addition, the courses of many important diseases were highly sensitive to changing temperatures and patterns of precipitation. Rising sea levels could displace millions

of poor people in developing countries and were of particular concern to small island States. The resilience capacity of many ecosystems was likely to be exceeded in the present century by an unprecedented combination of climate changes and their accompanying disturbances.

50. Many representatives stressed that it had been recognized that the distribution of causes and effects of climate change was highly uneven across developed and developing countries, as reflected by the principle of "common and differentiated responsibilities" in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[4] and the Kyoto Protocol thereto.[5] The Convention should serve as the main framework for the response to climate change; and a central issue was to ensure appropriate financial transfers from the industrialized to the developing countries to assist the latter in achieving both adaptation and mitigation.

51. It was noted that realistic targets for carbon dioxide (CO_2) reductions would be essential for both developed and developing countries. In order to achieve the target set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for an 80 per cent reduction of carbon emissions by 2050, the international community would have to implement far-reaching policy measures. While the modification of the Panel targets would be a risky option, feasible economic instruments would have to be developed to enable developing countries to make up for their enormous shortfalls in energy supply, without endangering their economic growth paths and poverty reduction efforts. A considerable number of speakers stated that priorities with respect to needs and additional support should be identified by developing countries themselves. A coherent and integrated response at the global level to climate change should recognize ownership and alignment.

52. It was pointed out that the international carbon market had grown substantively over the last years. Emissions trading and other Kyoto-inspired market-based mechanisms, such as the Clean Development Mechanism, engaged the private sector, stimulated investment and gave emitters some flexibility in respect of how they could meet their emissions-reduction commitments. However, for the Clean Development Mechanism to be truly effective, it must specify clearer goals and would have to be scaled up substantially. It was further noted that the implementation of carbon taxes at the global level would be highly regressive, if carried out with a complete disregard for their distributional impact.

53. Numerous representatives referred to the importance of public and private investments in new technologies for mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. They stated that it would be important in this regard to focus on the development of new technologies in the public domain and not solely on proprietary technologies. Many recognized that financing mechanisms for international targets on climate change should be based on income, capacity and responsibility. Targets for conventional ODA directed towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals should be separated from financial targets for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The resource mobilization for climate change policies would have to be additional to current ODA levels, which would require substantial transfers from industrialized to developing countries through which to assist the latter with both mitigation and adaptation. A global sustainable development

[4] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.
[5] FCCC/CP/1997/7/Add.1, decision 1/CP.3, annex.

strategy that mobilized new investments should reduce both greenhouse gases and poverty. The existing financing mechanisms should be utilized more effectively before new instruments were created.

54. Some speakers emphasized that the increased focus of the international community on climate change should not lead to a situation in which other important basic development needs would be sidelined. A long-term and integrated development perspective is needed, as climate change policies should not distract attention from issues such as poverty alleviation, employment-creation and infrastructure development. Also, some participants referred to an apparent contradiction in the approach to climate change. While the biofuels boom might have environmentally friendly implications, some observers argued that it had contributed to the food crisis affecting the world's most vulnerable populations.

55. Many delegates stressed that the most vulnerable economies, such as the least developed countries, small island developing States and a large number of low-income countries, would be hit the hardest by climate change and that the poorest people would often be the most adversely affected. Addressing this problem would require the scaling up of additional sources of finance for these nations. Small island States and low-line coastal countries, for instance, should not be obligated to take out loans in their efforts to adapt to rising sea levels, since the phenomenon was caused by the carbon footprints of other countries. Grants or highly concessional resources would be necessary. It was further noted that the most vulnerable countries did not have the capacity to cope with and recover from climate shocks. Since it could be expected that humanitarian disasters associated with extreme weather events such as droughts and floods would become more frequent, intense and disruptive, effective disaster management should be made available to these nations.

56. Many representatives emphasized the commitment of the World Bank to addressing mitigation and adaptation efforts and welcomed the Bank's contribution to the implementation of international efforts to deal with climate change. The proposed climate investment funds that would be provided by the World Bank for the deployment of existing and new climate-friendly technologies were acknowledged to be an important mechanism in the fight against climate change. It was noted, however, that the mechanism would need to be scaled up substantially and that its governance structures would need to be equitable. It was also noted that while the climate change policy framework of the World Bank constituted an important contribution to the global policy response to global warming, Bank initiatives as well as other international initiatives should make the principles and guidelines of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change their basis for action.

57. A considerable number of participants called upon countries and key stakeholders to give the issue of climate change a prominent role in the Doha review conference. This should include deliberations on the need for appropriate sources of finance for the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and on addressing the threats posed by global warming to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda**
Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 62/94 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/3.

The present report describes major humanitarian trends and challenges that have occurred during the past year and analyses two thematic issues of concern: the humanitarian implications of climate change and the humanitarian challenges related to the current global food trends. The report provides an overview of current key processes to improve humanitarian coordination and ends with recommendations for further strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

* A/63/50.
** E/2008/100.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to the requests contained in General Assembly resolution 62/94 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/3.

II. Overview of humanitarian trends and challenges

2. During the reporting period the largest driver of disasters was the increased incidence and severity of extreme weather events, mostly associated with climate change. Nine out of every 10 disasters are now climate related. During the past year, the United Nations has issued an unprecedented 15 funding appeals for sudden-onset disasters, five more than the previous year. Fourteen of these were climate-related.

3. The humanitarian consequences of inter-State and intra-state conflicts remain high. Displacement continues to be a major source of concern. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that at the end of 2007 there were 11.4 million refugees worldwide, an estimated 26 million people displaced within their own country due to violence and persecution, and another 26 million displaced by hazard-related disasters. The figures include long-standing displaced populations in Colombia and Sri Lanka, as well as new population displacements in the Central African Republic, Chad, Iraq, Kenya, the Sudan and Somalia. In response to some of these needs, the 2008 humanitarian consolidated appeal reported that 25 million people would require humanitarian assistance at a cost of $3.8 billion.

4. Compounding the challenges of climate change and armed conflict are recent jumps in food and fuel prices which have led to violent protests in many countries. High food prices have the potential to sharply increase the incidence and depth of food insecurity. In addition to the estimated 800 million people suffering from hunger, the World Bank predicts that the food security crisis may push another 100 million people into poverty, thereby reversing progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in many countries. The crisis is having an immediate impact on the cost of humanitarian operations and will likely lead to significant additional demand for food, health and nutritional assistance, while the solutions lie in boosting investment in measures to enhance agricultural productivity. These dynamics indicate that global demand for humanitarian assistance, which is already considerable, is likely to increase in the coming decade.

A. Disasters associated with natural hazards

5. In 2007, the Centre for the Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters reported that 414 disasters associated with climate change caused over 16,000 deaths and affected more than 234 million people. Floods or storms were responsible for 86 per cent of all natural disaster deaths and 98 per cent of populations affected by natural disasters. Since 1987 climate-related disasters have increased by almost 90 per cent, while geological hazards have increased by nearly 40 per cent. Part of the increase, however, is attributed to better reporting.

6. Asia continued to be the region most affected by disasters associated with natural hazards. Eight of the 10 countries in the world with the highest number of reported disaster deaths were in Asia, with 4,234 killed in Bangladesh by cyclone Sidr in November 2007, and more than 3,000 fatalities from severe floods in Bangladesh, China, India and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In China, millions were affected by a major earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter Scale which struck Sichuan province on 12 May 2008. As of 27 May the official death toll had exceeded 67,000, an estimated 362,000 had been injured and over 45 million people were affected. In Myanmar, Cyclone Nargis, which struck on 2 May 2008, has caused widespread flooding and power failures and destroyed houses, roads and markets. Some 2.4 million people are believed to be severely affected and 1.4 million are in need of urgent assistance. As of 20 May the official death toll was almost 78,000 and an estimated 56,000 were reported missing. Humanitarian actors are concerned that if affected populations are not provided with immediate life-saving assistance, the population's suffering will further increase.

7. Unusually heavy rainfall in Africa, in November 2006-March 2007 and November 2007-March 2008, led to some of the worst and most widespread flooding in the continent's recorded history. Flooding in the eastern, central and western parts of Africa killed more than 200 people, displaced over 600,000 and affected millions. The Southern African region was the worst hit. Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia hardly had time to recover from the floods of late 2006-early 2007 before they were forced to face uncommonly early, torrential rainfall and consecutive cyclones in early 2008. Those caused widespread damage to infrastructure and crops, killed thousands of livestock and affected the lives of more than a million people. This was followed by severe drought conditions, felt particularly hard in Lesotho, Swaziland, southern Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

8. Major impacts of natural hazards were also felt in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the first time in recorded history, two Atlantic hurricanes, Dean and Felix, made landfall in the same season, during August-September 2007, affecting Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. In Bolivia and Ecuador continuous rains and flooding in March and April 2008 killed close to 100 and affected more than 700,000 people. In Bolivia, the authorities reported that some 90 per cent of key summer crops had been destroyed on land that remained underwater throughout the harvest season. In Ecuador, the flooding affected half the country's 13 provinces, triggering demands for assistance in basic services, early recovery and logistics.

9. Where they were prepared, affected communities and Governments were able to respond effectively to disasters. In Southern Africa and Asia the 2007/08 response to the rain and cyclone season saw significant improvements from previous years. Investment in early-warning systems and improved cooperation among Governments in managing the river systems have led to a dramatic decrease in the number of deaths. Preparedness measures, including contingency planning and pre-positioning of relief items, have contributed to a more timely and effective response. While in Mozambique floods of similar magnitude caused about 700 deaths in 2002, only 20 deaths were recorded in 2008. Deaths from Cyclone Sidr, which struck Bangladesh in late 2007, were far lower than the death toll in 1991 when a major cyclone killed 138,000 people. By contrast, the lack of disaster risk reduction and preparedness in Myanmar, for which Cyclone Nargis was a disaster of unprecedented magnitude, undoubtedly contributed to the very high death toll.

10. Where Governments needed and requested international assistance, the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and non-governmental organizations were able and ready to respond. The United Nations issued a total of 20 flash appeals related to disasters in 2007/08, requesting a total of $712 million. Additionally, the United Nations deployed 15 United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams to help assess needs and coordinate humanitarian response.

B. Complex emergencies

11. The crisis in Darfur is now five years old, with no immediate end in sight. Almost 2.4 million people are displaced, most of whom are women and children. Sexual violence including rape remains a significant problem. Two thirds of the Darfur population require some form of humanitarian assistance. The world's largest aid operation, comprising more than 14,700 humanitarian workers, the vast majority of them Sudanese, struggles daily to cope with a difficult operating environment exacerbated by continued harassment, carjackings and targeted attacks. In Western Darfur more than 100,000 civilians were forced to flee from violence in the first few months of 2008, at a rate of 1,000 per day. Some 13,000 civilians fled into Chad in the largest single registered refugee movement in Darfur since 2004. The deterioration of the situation has highlighted the need for rapid deployment of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), while there are clear threats to the historic 2005 North-South peace agreement, which ended one of Africa's longest and bloodiest wars.

12. In Iraq ongoing violence and other aid delivery challenges are preventing millions from accessing essential services. The United Nations estimates that four million Iraqis are in urgent need of food assistance and only 40 per cent of the Iraqi population has reliable access to safe drinking water. One third of the population is cut off from essential health care and necessary medication and between 4 and 9 per cent of children under five are suffering from acute malnutrition. An estimated 2.2 million Iraqis (8 per cent of Iraq's population) have fled Iraq since 2003; another 2.5 million (9 per cent of the population) are estimated to be displaced within Iraq's borders. Syria hosts the bulk of Iraqi refugees (an estimated 1.5 million), followed by Jordan (450,000-500,000). Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and Turkey host smaller populations of Iraqi refugees.

13. In Somalia the situation has deteriorated further. Two million people are expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance or livelihood support in 2008 — an increase of more than 50 per cent from 2007. Following an upsurge in violence between the Transitional Federal Government and anti-Government elements, the United Nations estimates that since 2007, 800,000 people have fled the fighting in Mogadishu, only to be confronted with crop failure, erratic rainfall, drought, record high food prices and malnutrition levels more than 15 per cent above emergency thresholds in the areas where they have settled. In Sri Lanka the escalation of the conflict has been marked by further bombings, killings, abductions, forced recruitment and arbitrary arrests and has displaced more than 308,000 people.

14. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the United Nations has been providing assistance to affected communities for six decades. Palestinian populations in the West Bank and Gaza as well as Israeli populations in Sderot and western Negev

continue to struggle with violence and economic restrictions. In Gaza, where close to 80 per cent of the population depends on humanitarian aid, the almost total lockdown of crossing points into the Gaza Strip since June 2007 has impeded the entry and distribution of humanitarian assistance and prevented commercial goods from entering and exiting markets. Severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods in the West Bank and Gaza have deeply affected commercial activities. The resulting economic stagnation has put nearly half of the population below the poverty line, in Gaza in particular. Civilians in Sderot and western Negev in Israel live in constant fear for their lives, as rockets and mortars continue to be fired indiscriminately from Gaza.

15. These long-standing emergencies were punctuated by political unrest in countries that had previously enjoyed relative stability. In Kenya, six weeks of rioting followed the announcement of results of the disputed presidential election in December 2007. More than 1,000 civilians were killed and 300,000 people displaced. In more than 30 countries violent riots and protests against the escalation of food prices could risk derailing critical development programmes.

16. Where the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have been able to respond to these complex emergencies, they have been effective at providing timely assistance to people in need. For example, United Nations agencies and partner organizations were able to provide safe water and sanitation to one million internally displaced persons in Somalia; cared for 240,000 Sudanese refugees and 180,000 internally displaced persons in eastern Chad; provided emergency job creation and cash assistance to 44,000 destitute families in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; delivered food to 4.1 million vulnerable Zimbabweans; distributed 12,535 blankets, 10,275 mats and 14,600 plastic sheets, to internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic; assisted 10,000 people displaced by civil strife in Timor-Leste; contained 131 epidemics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and drilled over 300 boreholes to provide water for war-affected people in Uganda.

17. However, in too many places humanitarian workers are denied access to needy populations and are attacked when trying to provide assistance. At a time of increasing humanitarian needs and a growing demand for humanitarian operations, the need for acceptance of and respect for the principles that underpin humanitarian action is greater than ever.

III. Humanitarian principles

18. Humanitarian action must be conducted in compliance with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence as reaffirmed in General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. Humanitarian actors' adherence to these principles remains critical to ensure that humanitarian assistance can be provided fairly and wherever needed. Humanity emphasizes the need to prevent and alleviate human suffering and protect life and health while ensuring respect for the individual. Impartiality requires humanitarian actors to make no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class or political opinions in their operations, responding on the basis of humanitarian need alone. Neutrality precludes humanitarian actors from taking sides in conflicts or engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature. Independence requires humanitarian assistance to be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other

objectives. The effectiveness of humanitarian response depends on the acceptance and recognition of these principles by all relevant actors including the warring parties. Failure to apply these principles to humanitarian operations not only jeopardizes humanitarian activities, but may increase the risks for people affected by conflicts and hazard-related disasters as well as for humanitarian staff working to alleviate human suffering.

19. Humanitarian actors' access to populations in need and the ability of these populations to access assistance is a fundamental prerequisite for humanitarian operations. In complex emergencies, parties to armed conflict are expected to facilitate the safe passage of relief consignments in a rapid and timely manner. This is provided for in international humanitarian law and reiterated in several General Assembly resolutions.

20. However, access to life-saving assistance is often hindered by ongoing hostilities, restrictions on freedom of movement, banditry, looting of relief items, bureaucratic obstacles or overt obstruction of humanitarian activities. These constraints indicate lack of respect for humanitarian principles. The resulting failure to ensure rapid and unimpeded access to vulnerable populations deprives millions of civilians of much-needed relief. In Somalia the proliferation of roadblocks and checkpoints controlled by various armed actors and illegal taxation lead to significant delays in and increased costs of humanitarian assistance delivery. Increasing insecurity and overt threats to humanitarian workers made it a difficult and dangerous environment in which to operate. In Iraq, insecurity prevents international staff from supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance, while bureaucratic impediments exclude significant portions of the civilian population from basic services and assistance. The severe restriction of fuel imports into Gaza has led to the disruption of basic services and, on occasion, forced the suspension of food assistance to some 650,000 people.

21. Meanwhile, humanitarian workers are increasingly — and unacceptably — subject to deliberate violent attacks. Of growing concern are direct threats and physical assaults on humanitarian personnel by parties to conflict and criminal elements. The continued prevalence of such threats has direct implications for populations affected by conflict and in need of assistance. In Darfur, 273 security incidents were reported by non-governmental organizations in 2007,[1] including incidents in which 16 staff members suffered gunshot wounds. Robbery and banditry are of increasing concern, with car-jackings causing millions of dollars in losses and imposing severe limitations on aid groups' operational capacity. During the same period, 26 humanitarian premises were assaulted. In Afghanistan, during 2007, non-governmental organizations reported 135 security incidents, which included the killing of 15 staff members (4 international and 11 nationals), the abduction of 66 personnel and 65 armed attacks on humanitarian convoys.

22. In 2007, the Department for Safety and Security reported 520 violent attacks on United Nations personnel and the deaths of 16 staff members from malicious

[1] General Assembly resolution 60/123 called for further efforts to enhance security collaboration between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is working closely with the Department for Safety and Security and non-governmental organizations on staff security under the framework of "Saving Lives Together", a series of non-binding recommendations to enhance the security of humanitarian operations.

attacks in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Malawi, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Uganda. Locally recruited humanitarian and United Nations personnel remain particularly vulnerable and have suffered the majority of casualties, arrests and incidents of harassment. Fifteen of the 16 deaths reported by the Department for Safety and Security were of locally recruited staff. In Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo access restrictions caused by safety and security concerns are compounded by ongoing fighting, the breakdown of chains of commands within armed movements and banditry, which jeopardize the safety and security of humanitarian actors. In Darfur, road banditry has increased by 350 per cent compared to 2007. In the first quarter of 2008, 96 vehicles were hijacked including three UNAMID vehicles and 60 trucks contracted by the World Food Programme (WFP). In April 2008 WFP was forced to reduce monthly food portions by 50 per cent. This will reduce the daily kilocalorie value of the ration by 40 per cent and prevent sufficient stocks of food relief from reaching needy populations. Governments are urged to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel operating within their borders. Public acknowledgment of their impartiality and their positive role is an important step in this direction.

23. A growing challenge to the application of humanitarian principles is the increasingly blurred distinction between military and humanitarian civilian actors. This is most evident in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where humanitarian workers operate in close proximity with armed forces and military actors provide humanitarian aid. While the importance of civil-military communication and coordination channels is well recognized, it remains vital to the effectiveness of humanitarian operations that the distinction between humanitarian and military purposes and actors be strictly maintained. Within the United Nations, important steps have been taken to promote a unified system-wide response in complex emergencies while maintaining appropriate organizational and structural arrangements that allow humanitarian actors to work in a principled manner. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has developed a series of guidelines on the relationship and interaction between humanitarian and military actors such as the IASC reference paper on civil-military relationships in complex emergencies, the guidelines on the use of military and civil defence assets to support United Nations humanitarian activities in complex emergencies and the guidelines on the use of military and armed escorts for humanitarian convoys. The United Nations, in consultation with Member States and military actors, will continue its efforts to ensure that civil-military guidelines are broadly disseminated, well understood and respected by all actors involved.

24. Humanitarian actors must consistently distinguish themselves from other actors in the field. To this end, organizational and structural arrangements conducive to independent humanitarian action are a fundamental prerequisite where humanitarian actors are operating alongside political and peacekeeping missions. In this regard, United Nations humanitarian actors have continued to strengthen coordination with peacekeeping operations. Additionally, several codes of conduct have been developed to guide the behaviour of humanitarian actors in line with humanitarian principles. The Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13) provides an example of these codes. The bulletin reiterates the zero tolerance policy for abuse and exploitation and the humanitarian community's obligation to support the

victims. These guidelines must be continually reaffirmed and renewed in order to promote accountability to fundamental principles in the face of complex and evolving operational contexts.

IV. Emerging humanitarian challenges

25. The most notable humanitarian developments of the reporting period revolve around the humanitarian impact of climate change and of the global increase in food prices. These phenomena have led to increased humanitarian needs and pose unique challenges to response capacity.

A. Humanitarian implications of climate change: challenges for disaster risk reduction and preparedness

26. During the past 20 years, the number of recorded disasters has doubled from approximately 200 to more than 400 per year. Disasters caused by floods are more frequent (increasing from about 50 in 1985 to more than 200 in 2005) and damage larger areas than they did 20 years ago. What we are witnessing today should not be considered an aberration. Current trends indicate a future where extreme climate variability and its consequences are likely to become the norm.

27. The humanitarian implications are significant, including more frequent and intense storms and rising sea levels, both of which increase the risk of flooding. Nearly 634 million people — one tenth of the global population — live in at-risk coastal areas a few metres above existing sea levels, three quarters of which are located in the Asian flood-prone river deltas or in low-lying small island States. Almost two thirds of cities with populations greater than 5 million fall, at least partly, in low-lying flood-prone areas. Twenty-one per cent of the urban populations of least developed nations live in such environments.

28. Climate change will increase climatic extremes and the likelihood and geographic range of drought. It impacts agriculture production and food systems, thereby increasing the number of people at risk of hunger. In some African countries rainfall-fed agriculture is projected to halve by 2020 and desertification is engulfing larger areas of the Sahel region, owing in part to an increasingly arid climate, decreased rainfall and extended periods of drought. Many communities in the Sahel are dependent on land for agriculture and pastoralism; desertification and subsequent food insecurity will increase their vulnerability. Approximately 200 million people in Africa (25 per cent of the continent's population) currently do not have access to clean water. The number is expected to grow by 50 million by 2020 and to 400 million by 2050. In 1995, nearly 1.4 billion people (24 per cent of the global population) lived in high-stressed watersheds where water demand outstripped supply. By 2025, this figure is projected to rise to over 3 billion based on population growth alone.

29. Increased flooding is leading to higher rates of waterborne diseases, and rising temperatures have increased the likelihood of malaria epidemics in Africa. Unless protective measures are strengthened, climate change will expand the range of diseases such as dengue fever, exposing an additional 2 billion people to transmission by the 2080s. In 2000, the World Health Organization (WHO)

estimated that global warming was responsible for 150,000 deaths, as any increase in global temperature will increase fatalities. Climatic extremes may exacerbate the struggle for access to and control of scarce resources which could lead to population displacement and armed conflict. Given vulnerability patterns, droughts and floods will increase the risk of short-term, temporary migration. Climate change may also exacerbate longer-term migration trends associated with environmental degradation and desertification. This points to the need for strengthened protection mechanisms for disaster-affected populations, as well as improved coordination between humanitarian and development actors to reduce the potentially negative impact of longer-term migration trends.

30. Initial analyses of the links between climate change and increasing food prices are under way. At a time when global food stocks are at an all-time low, food supply could be further diminished by extreme weather events that trigger harvest failures and changes in weather and temperature that alter agricultural production patterns. In 2006/07 a year's worth of wheat was lost to drought in Australia, and cold weather caused grain crops to fail in Europe and the United States of America. Climate change may also impact food security, as changing crop yields may continue to drive up prices for basic food commodities in food-importing countries.

31. The immediate challenge posed to humanitarian organizations by climate change is how to prepare for and respond to these more frequent and intense climatic events. There is an urgent need to increase investment in disaster risk reduction and preparedness in high-risk settings and to mobilize support for addressing the humanitarian impacts of climate change. In the immediate future, these efforts must focus on risk areas such as storms, floods and droughts, while taking into account the longer-term impacts such as rising sea levels. Data and analysis of the humanitarian implications of climate change remain in their early stages. Humanitarian actors are increasingly engaging with the World Meteorological Organization and climate scientists to see how current national and regional climate modelling and weather forecasting can best be incorporated into early warning systems and used to improve disaster preparedness and response. Governments are encouraged to strengthen their preparedness for disasters, in particular their legal frameworks, including through the implementation of the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, adopted by the thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2007.

32. While increasing the humanitarian community's knowledge of hazards is critical, improving the understanding of how climate hazards affect existing patterns of vulnerability and risk is equally important. For this reason, humanitarian actors are increasingly considering how risk profiles and tools can be updated to provide a more comprehensive analysis of vulnerability caused by climate change. Factors such as changes in morbidity patterns, access to food and water, urbanization, capacity of current infrastructure and potential migration patterns are central components of the analysis. Progress on this issue was the development of the Bali Action Plan agreed at the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference. The plan emphasized the need for improved vulnerability assessments, capacity-building, response strategies, insurance and disaster risk reduction strategies, as well as closer consideration of the specific needs of African countries affected by drought, desertification and floods.

B. Humanitarian implications of global food trends

33. A substantial increase in food commodity prices combined with diminishing food stocks is having a major impact on food security and humanitarian aid globally. Since mid-2007, United Nations agencies have reported food commodity cost increases ranging from 30 to 130 per cent. Drivers of increasing prices can be divided into demand-related and supply-related factors. Demand-related factors include global population growth and changing food consumption patterns, often towards diets richer in meat and dairy. A large increase in biofuel production has led to increased demand for commodities such as maize and palm oil. Preliminary evidence indicates that strategies of institutional investors in commodity markets may also be contributing to higher prices and price fluctuations. An important supply-related driver is the fact that the world's food reserve stocks have dwindled to their lowest level in 30 years, because of a belief that food would remain plentiful and available at a relatively low price. Increased costs of fertilizer and fuel have also contributed to rising food prices.

34. Preliminary predictions indicate that current food trends will create serious humanitarian challenges in the immediate, medium and long terms. The most alarming immediate consequence is the increased incidence of social and political food-related unrest in a large number of countries, which, as already observed in 2008, has the potential for political instability. This risk is particularly high in countries emerging from violent conflict, where fragile security, political and economic progress is easily derailed. In some cases, United Nations stabilization efforts could be undermined, as peacekeeping missions come under pressure to support Government efforts to quell riots and humanitarian staff and their facilities become targets. Apart from the immediate security response, urgent efforts are needed to monitor food markets and prices (especially in urban areas), factor food-related unrest into conflict early warning systems and integrate food security into peacebuilding and contingency plans.

35. Meanwhile, food assistance has become more expensive. To maintain current levels, additional funds are being needed to cover food and transport costs. WFP recently requested an additional $755 million to meet the cost of its already assessed projects for 2008. While the response to this appeal has been generous, significant extra resources are likely to be required as many of those who depend on external food assistance may face a reduction of rations.

36. National reactions to food price hikes vary. Most food-importing countries have reduced or eliminated import tariffs and taxes, an action whose fiscal implications still need to be assessed. Budget cuts affecting Government development programmes could have long-term consequences for food security and poverty. Many food-exporting countries have imposed export tariffs and quotas to reduce domestic prices, or banned exports altogether. A few countries are making purchases to replenish stockpiles and strategic reserves, while others are increasing subsidy levels or examining the possibility of rationing. Governments should be cautious to avoid the possible impacts of such policies including their potential to exacerbate shortages, further raise prices in importing countries or reduce production incentives.

37. Finally, one of the most serious challenges may be a greater incidence and depth of food insecurity, requiring emergency interventions. While anecdotal

evidence is emerging from developing regions about the impact of higher food prices on people, there are no global estimates yet of how many people may become hungry. Though it is difficult to establish thresholds for food insecurity and account for coping strategies, there are multiple signs of distress on the part of the poorest households — which are mostly female-headed — such as selling assets, eating less and eating worse. The United Nations system must urgently improve needs assessments and vulnerability analysis while working with Governments to develop effective safety nets (in the form of food, vouchers or cash transfers; school feeding, employment and nutrition programmes; insurance schemes, etc.) to protect vulnerable populations.

38. At the national level, Governments need to dedicate more resources to boosting agricultural production and strengthening social safety net programmes to stabilize the provision of food and nutritional support, health care and emergency education. Safety nets can mitigate the long-term impact of food price increases such as malnutrition, prevent distress asset sales and allow increased investment in health and education. Measures, including local procurement of food supplies and cash transfers, should be established to help Governments and food agencies to boost their emergency operational capacity. These national-level programmes should be underpinned by market analysis to ensure that local procurement and cash transfers do not make food even more inaccessible to the poorest groups who fall beyond safety-net coverage.

39. It remains imperative that Governments, communities and international agencies become better equipped to provide longer-term solutions to new patterns of hunger. This will require strengthened United Nations coherence and partnerships with Governments to enhance national capacities to address hunger and ensure food security. Food and agriculture agencies are taking steps to mitigate the implications of cost increases, including by purchasing food commodities in local and regional markets. WFP is currently purchasing 80 per cent of its food supplies from developing countries to reduce delivery costs and support local economies. However, there is an increasing risk that further expansion in local purchases may be impeded by the export bans imposed in many countries. At the global policy level, additional resources must be allocated to research the implications this trend and find ways to mitigate its adverse impacts at all levels.

40. Given the urgent need for action and policy support at the global and country levels, an international strategy is needed that outlines coherent and coordinated responses to rising food prices. In May 2008, the Secretary-General established a high-level task force on the global food security crisis, which comprises relevant United Nations agencies and Bretton Woods institutions. The task force will aim to develop a comprehensive framework for action that defines common strategies in support of authorities and affected populations. The response will include key immediate and long-term actions, policies and resources and address a wide range of food security issues. Humanitarian actors will play a central role, particularly in the short term.

V. Ongoing challenges

A. Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance

41. In 2006 the United Nations launched a series of initiatives aiming to further enhance the coordination of its emergency humanitarian response by increasing capacity, capability, predictability, accountability and equity in humanitarian action. These initiatives focused on four areas: capacity and coordination in the field; leadership; partnerships; and predictable and equitable humanitarian financing.

Capacity and coordination in the field

42. Capacity and coordination in the field were strengthened through the implementation of the cluster approach,[2] which was developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to address identified response gaps. Under the cluster approach, thematic leads have been designated for areas that previously had no clear lead organization. The approach has contributed to enhanced coordination, decision-making and partnerships among humanitarian actors, both in the field and globally.

43. During the reporting period, the cluster approach has been implemented in 12 out of 26 countries where resident and humanitarian coordinators are in place. This number will increase in 2008 as more coordinators introduce the cluster approach to improve coordination in preparedness exercises and ongoing emergency response operations. In Pakistan and Mozambique the approach was used for the second time in response to floods. The cluster approach was immediately implemented in Myanmar following Cyclone Nargis. An independent evaluation conducted in 2007 indicated that clusters have successfully addressed response gaps and improved strategic planning and preparedness at the field level. The evaluation, however, identified the need to better mainstream gender, HIV/AIDS, environmental concerns and early recovery and to strengthen the clusters' accountability to stakeholders, including national Governments and beneficiaries. To further support the global humanitarian response capacity, an appeal was launched in 2007 requesting $63 million. To date, only 53 per cent of that amount has been raised.

Enhanced humanitarian coordination: the resident and humanitarian coordinator system

44. More effective humanitarian leadership at the field level — whether the function is performed by resident or humanitarian coordinators — is critical to an enhanced and accountable humanitarian response. Effective humanitarian coordination requires qualified individuals who provide leadership during humanitarian emergencies. Efforts to strengthen this function face the following challenges: the pool of potential humanitarian coordinators is narrow; opportunities for coordinators to share experiences and best practices are limited; and the accountability framework for humanitarian coordinators requires further development.

[2] The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is not taking part in the cluster approach. Nevertheless, coordination between ICRC and the United Nations will continue to the extent necessary to achieve efficient operational complementary and strengthened response for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.

45. To address these weaknesses, in 2007 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee developed and began to implement a three-year work plan. The progress achieved includes: a standardized induction programme for newly appointed humanitarian coordinators; enhanced accountability through better identification of joint humanitarian priorities between the Emergency Relief Coordinator and humanitarian coordinators; and a mentoring system for newly appointed humanitarian coordinators. Additional system-wide efforts are ongoing to strengthen performance appraisals for humanitarian coordinators.

Predictability of response: humanitarian financing

46. Strengthened leadership capacity should be supported by sufficient and flexible funding to meet urgent humanitarian needs. The humanitarian system has established several mechanisms to improve the speed, equity and predictability of humanitarian financing. These humanitarian "pooled funds" comprise the Central Emergency Response Fund at the global level and the common humanitarian funds and emergency response funds at the field level. Complemented by a strong Consolidated Appeal Process that allows for the identification and prioritization of humanitarian needs by all stakeholders, these funding mechanisms can be highly effective in facilitating rapid and needs-based humanitarian response.

47. Pooled funding mechanisms have seen significant success. Donors have pledged $1.1 billion to the Central Emergency Response Fund since its inception. During two years of operation, the Fund has committed $708.9 million to 879 projects in 60 countries. A two-year evaluation of the Fund — as mandated by the General Assembly — is currently under way. The Secretary-General will report on the evaluation findings to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Donors have committed $330 million to the common humanitarian fund in the Sudan, and nearly $300 million in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During 2008, common humanitarian funds will be established in Ethiopia and the Central African Republic. While these funds have provided humanitarian/resident coordinators with tools to enhance humanitarian coordination and allocate funds based on needs, additional efforts are still required to improve prioritization and allocation of resources. A series of efforts — including training, coaching and enhanced guidelines — has been undertaken to improve the decision-making processes. Developing improved performance and accountability frameworks, in addition to needs analysis frameworks and tools, will enhance the use of these funds.

Equity and accountability of response: enhancing needs assessments

48. A common analytical framework that allows humanitarian stakeholders to jointly determine humanitarian needs and priorities is important to ensuring timely, accountable and equitable provision of humanitarian assistance. In consultation with other United Nations partners, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has begun a mapping of ongoing assessment initiatives in an effort to develop a global needs assessment framework that provides for the joint collection and use of data. This framework will include definitions, key indicators, information management mechanisms and data collection methodologies that can be used by humanitarian actors, donors and Governments.

Partnerships

49. The Global Humanitarian Platform brings together humanitarian organizations from within and outside the United Nations system to identify ways to strengthen humanitarian partnerships. Its goal is to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian assistance and strengthen the capacity of local non-governmental organizations. At its second meeting, in 2007, the Platform endorsed the principles of partnership, namely equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity. At its next meeting, to be held in July 2008, the Platform will discuss how the principles are being translated into practice, for example in the context of the current rise in global food prices.

B. Foreign military assets in disaster relief

50. During the reporting period and at the request of Member States, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs commissioned an independent study on the use of foreign military assets in disaster relief. Completed in late 2007 and launched in early 2008, the study reported that foreign military assets are a common feature of major international disaster relief operations. The findings of the study indicate that while humanitarian relief is — and should remain — a predominantly civilian function, foreign military assets can play a valuable role in disaster relief operations. Given the predictions about the impact of climate change, the use of foreign military assets may increase in the future.

51. The study defined foreign military assets as military personnel, equipment and services provided by Governments with the consent of the affected State for major international disaster relief assistance. The study found that air transport was the most frequently deployed asset, followed by medical support and expert personnel for civil-military coordination, needs assessments and logistics. The study identified FMA contributors as mostly countries in North America and Europe, who provided assistance to distant and neighbouring countries, while many countries in most regions had contributed FMA to assist their neighbours in disaster relief.

52. Following a major hazard event, several factors will influence a Government's decision to request or offer military assistance: the scale and humanitarian impact of the disaster; the level of preparedness of the affected country; countries' policies on accepting military assets or making them available for disaster relief; national interests; and diplomatic and historic relations. Countries affected by natural disasters usually turn first to their neighbours for assistance because of the proximity of their assets and a likely understanding of their operational context. Most deployments of foreign military assets in disaster relief are a result of direct, bilateral negotiations between Governments or their national militaries, based on established relationships, though a few countries have policies against the deployment of foreign forces on their territories for various reasons. Regional multilateral frameworks and other methods of coordinating the deployment and use of military assets have recently been explored, such as the Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency. Foreign military assets are rarely provided through the United Nations.

53. The study found that bilateral channelling of military assets led to a lack of coordination and occasionally overloaded the affected country's ability to use the

assets effectively. Regarding the role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the study recommended a review of its coordination role with a view to identifying ways in which it can add value to what is likely to remain a system dominated by bilateral relationships. For example, the Office might help Governments' management of foreign military assets by improving the ability of resident/humanitarian coordinators to assist Governments in determining the need for such assets and their effective use. UNDAC teams might include more civil-military liaison experts, and military actors might be invited to participate in joint humanitarian needs assessments. A reassessment of the central register of military and civil defence assets is another concrete step that might be taken in this regard.

54. The study reaffirmed the need for Governments to deploy foreign military assets in an effective and principled manner and the importance of existing international guidelines on this issue, particularly the Oslo Guidelines adopted in 1994 and updated in 2006, which it identified as the international normative and practical framework for the use of foreign military assets in disaster response. The Oslo Guidelines stipulate that all humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the core principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and with full respect for the sovereignty of States. They reiterate that assistance should be based on actual needs and delivered by impartial and neutral actors, ensuring access to vulnerable populations and contributing to their safety. The study acknowledges that adherence to the Guidelines becomes particularly important when international disaster response is required in a complex emergency.

55. The study identified a considerable lack of awareness of the Guidelines among the different stakeholders and an uneven application of the Guidelines, particularly the concept of "last resort" which stipulates that military assets should be requested only when there is no comparable civilian alternative and when it meets a critical humanitarian need. The military assets must therefore be unique in capability and availability. There continues to be disagreement among Governments and humanitarian actors about how to balance the unique capabilities of military assets against the cost burdens, potential militarization of the situation and the effects of the presence of foreign troops on humanitarian actors' ability to operate. The study highlighted the need to raise awareness of the Oslo Guidelines more widely and to ensure that civilian and military actors discuss lessons and best practices following individual disaster relief operations. The experience following Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, where the Government declined all offers of foreign military assets despite the dramatic urgency of the situation, illustrates that this remains a very sensitive area.

Effectiveness of using foreign military assets in disaster response

56. In assessing the effectiveness of foreign military assets, the study highlighted that the timeliness of deploying them and making them operational appears to be the major factor. This depends on the availability of assets, the proximity of the provider, the reliability of information and bureaucratic processes. Poor information sharing and lack of clarity over status-of-forces agreements can cause significant delays. Clear national policies and the development of standing agreements between the contributing country and the agency coordinating the relief effort can significantly minimize the delay between the signing of any status-of-forces agreement, dispatch and operation.

57. The appropriateness of foreign military assets to the tasks at hand was also highlighted. Comprehensive, unified needs assessments and coordination frameworks could potentially ensure that appropriate military assets are provided. The length of deployment of foreign military assets, the sustainability of their relief efforts, perceptions and the nature of the emergency situation are additional factors that define their appropriateness. The efficiency with which foreign military assets operate and complement the relief effort; the absorptive capacity of the affected country, its ability to accommodate and effectively use foreign military and other disaster relief assets; and the coordination of the relief effort, including between civilian and military assets, are elements further impacting the effectiveness of foreign military assets.

58. The cost-effectiveness of foreign military assets is a source of concern for provider Governments who believe them to be costly and for humanitarian actors who fear the burden of the assets' costs on humanitarian funding. The Oslo Guidelines stipulate that the costs of deploying foreign military assets should not be borne by the affected Government and should be provided independently of funds earmarked for humanitarian relief assistance. The costs associated with foreign military assets are not readily available. It is, therefore, difficult to determine the effects of foreign military assets on humanitarian aid budgets. Several providers have introduced internal measures to ensure that the costs incurred in providing foreign military assets do not impact humanitarian funding sources. Cost-effectiveness is not only an inappropriate criterion to assess the efficacy of foreign military assets, but may also be a difficult factor given that costs are incomparable and may not be borne by humanitarian organizations. Furthermore, cost-effectiveness is a difficult argument to make when lives are at stake.

59. Measuring the effectiveness of the deployment, use and disengagement of foreign military assets in disaster relief depends upon the interplay of all the above factors. The decision to deploy military assets and the selection of the methods and types of assets to be deployed should be primarily based on humanitarian principles, identified humanitarian needs, the interests of the affected country and communities and the added value of foreign military assets to the overall relief effort.

C. Integrating a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance: review of the 1999 policy statement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

60. The significance of mainstreaming gender equality in humanitarian operations to ensure a more effective response has been increasingly recognized by policymakers and practitioners. In 2006, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee launched a five-point strategic plan guided by its 1999 gender policy statement, subsequently leading to an updated Committee policy on gender equality in humanitarian action which was endorsed in May 2008. Additionally, the coalition "United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Crisis" was launched in 2007 to harmonize the United Nations system's response to sexual violence in emergencies. It comprises 12 United Nations entities and supports field-level activities in several countries, including the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

61. The 2007 IASC gender policy review indicated that progress has been achieved. For example, a gender handbook was published to guide humanitarian

actors in ensuring that the different needs of women, girls, boys and men are addressed. Eleven gender advisors have been deployed to the field as part of a newly created gender capacity roster to support gender mainstreaming in country-level programming. Preliminary evaluations indicate that gender capacity rosters can significantly improve humanitarian response.

62. The policy review called for enhanced coordination among humanitarian actors in gender equality programming, including ensuring the equal participation of women, girls, boys and men in all aspects of humanitarian response. It is also fundamental to gender equality to ensure that women and girls are provided with equal opportunities for capacity-building and employment. It is imperative that humanitarian actors report sex- and age-disaggregated data to better inform decision-making, and that accountability mechanisms for mainstreaming gender equality be strengthened.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

63. Member States and humanitarian actors, both within and outside the United Nations system, are faced with complex challenges that suggest increasing demand for humanitarian assistance. Trends such as the increased incidence of climate-related disasters and the continued rise in global food prices are likely to increase communities' vulnerability. These trends require strengthened humanitarian response with enhanced coordination at all levels, as well as greater respect by all stakeholders of the humanitarian principles that underpin humanitarian assistance.

64. On the basis of the above, Member States are encouraged to consider the following:

(a) All actors engaged in the response to complex emergencies and natural disasters should be strongly urged to promote greater respect for the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence;

(b) Access to vulnerable populations and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel should be recognized as prerequisites for effective humanitarian response. States are urged to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel and relief consignments to populations in need;

(c) Appropriate steps need to be taken by the authorities concerned to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel operating within their borders. Authorities should refrain from public statements that jeopardize the safety and security of humanitarian workers;

(d) Risk reduction and preparedness measures against disasters should be developed and strengthened at all levels, in coordination with relevant actors and in accordance with priority five of the Hyogo Framework for Action[3] (preparedness for response);

(e) Member States and regional organizations are encouraged to strengthen operational and legal frameworks for international disaster relief through the continued implementation of internationally recognized guidelines, including the

[3] A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution II.

Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance;

(f) Greater efforts are required to intensify research to improve empirical data and analysis, in order to better understand the humanitarian consequences of climate change;

(g) The work of the Secretary-General's high-level task force on the global food security crisis should be strongly supported, so as to improve access to food by vulnerable populations, in particular children, enhance agriculture productivity and strengthen the development of food market monitoring systems;

(h) Increased resources need to be made available to meet current global humanitarian challenges such as climate change and increasing food prices. Humanitarian funding mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Response Fund, common humanitarian funds and emergency response funds could usefully be utilized in order to ensure predictable, timely and needs-based access to resources;

(i) The provision of military assets for disaster relief, based on humanitarian considerations, in accordance with the Oslo Guidelines and in full respect of the humanitarian principles, is encouraged. It should be ensured that internationally recognized guidelines on civil-military coordination such as the Oslo Guidelines are broadly disseminated, including through improved training;

(j) The United Nations and humanitarian partners should ensure that all aspects of humanitarian response address equally the needs of women, girls, men and boys, including through the improved collection, analysis and reporting of sex and age disaggregated data.

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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Letter dated 29 May 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, on behalf of the current Chairman of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the report of the Committee's twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, held from 13 to 15 May 2008 in Luanda, Republic of Angola (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 92 (f), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ismael Abraão **Gaspar Martins**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/63/50.

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Annex to the letter dated 29 May 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa on its twenty-seventh ministerial meeting

Luanda, 15 May 2008

Introduction

1. The twenty-seventh ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Luanda, Republic of Angola, from 13 to 15 May 2008.

2. The following member States participated in the meeting: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gabonese Republic, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and the Republic of Chad.

3. The secretariat of the Committee was comprised of members of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. The following entities participated as observers: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (UNCHRD-CA), Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (RECSA), and International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF).

4. The opening and closing statements were delivered by Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Angola.

5. The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs;
- A message from the Secretary-General of ECCAS, read out by Mr. Antonio Egidio de Sousa Santos, Under-Secretary-General for Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability.

Summary of proceedings

I. Adoption of the agenda

6. The meeting at which the agenda was adopted was chaired by Mr. Henri Eyebé Ayissi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, in his capacity as outgoing Bureau Chairman.

7. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee:
   (i) Burundi;
   (ii) Central African Republic;
   (iii) Republic of Chad, along with the report on the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise;
   (iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo.
5. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa:
   (i) Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and disarmament of civilian populations;
   (ii) Briefing by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs: implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative; preparations for the 2008 biennial meeting on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; Regional Workshop to Support the Implementation of the International Tracing Instrument (Nairobi, 10-11 December 2007); United Nations Workshop on Implementing Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa (Gaborone, 27-28 November 2007).
6. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms (status of ratification of the protocol on the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa).
7. Report on the activities of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.
8. Date of the next meeting.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting.

II. Election of the Bureau

8. Mr. Henri Eyebé Ayissi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, chaired the meeting at which the incoming Bureau was elected, in his capacity as outgoing Bureau Chairman.

9. The Committee elected a Bureau comprised of the following countries:

- Chairman: Republic of Angola
- First Vice-Chairman: Gabonese Republic
- Second Vice-Chairman: Republic of Chad
- Rapporteur: Central African Republic.

III. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman

10. The Committee noted with interest the report on the activities of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman. It commended the dynamism with which the Bureau had performed its duties and, in particular, its active contribution, in cooperation with the secretariat, to the preparation and organization of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting.

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee

11. The review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee revealed sharp contrasts in developments in Central Africa, particularly in the countries covered in the review, since the Committee's last meeting. While remarkable progress had been achieved in some countries that had once been the scene of armed conflict, persistent tensions, the deteriorating security situation and, very often, the resurgence of armed confrontations were stark reminders that peace was fragile in the countries covered.

12. The humanitarian and human rights situation also continued to be a serious source of concern in several parts of Central Africa.

13. That situation made it imperative for the parties concerned, the other countries of the subregion and the international community to take the necessary steps to bring about national reconciliation, consolidate peace and usher in a new era that would enable peoples who had suffered for too long from the scourge of war to flourish.

14. In accordance with the agenda, the delegations of the Republic of Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported on the geopolitical and security situation in their respective countries.

15. The Committee also took note of the statement by the delegation of Cameroon describing the geopolitical and security situation in that country.

(i) Republic of Burundi

16. The Committee took note of the formation of a new Government following the reshuffling that took place on 14 November 2007, which made possible the strict application of article 129 of the Constitution, as demanded by some political parties represented in the National Assembly.

17. The Committee condemned the recent attacks perpetrated by the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) against innocent populations in the capital, Bujumbura, in violation of the ceasefire agreement signed on 7 September 2006. The attacks resulted in loss of human life and significant material damage, including damage to the Apostolic Nuncio's residence.

18. The Committee urged the Government, Palipehutu-FNL and all other political actors to give priority to dialogue with a view to finding solutions to all outstanding problems and to take in good faith all steps necessary for the full implementation of the agreement.

19. The Committee launched a new appeal to the international community and to donors to provide Burundi with all the support it needed to tackle the serious socio-economic and security problems it faced.

(ii) Central African Republic

20. The Committee took note with satisfaction of the recent signing at Libreville, on 9 May 2008, of a ceasefire and peace agreement between the Government of the Central African Republic and the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD). The agreement was concluded under the auspices of Mr. El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, in his capacity as Chairman of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) ad hoc committee on Central African issues and in the presence of Mr. François Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic.

21. The Committee welcomed the submission of the report of the preparatory committee for the inclusive political dialogue, whose two main characteristics would be the participation of representatives of the armed rebel groups and mediation by a body specializing in conflict resolution, in the interest of neutrality. It encouraged the parties involved to continue making efforts to bring the dialogue to fruition.

22. The Committee also welcomed the developments reflected in the document submitted by the Central African Republic, particularly with regard to the deployment of the European Union operation under the terms of Security Council resolution 1778 (2007).

23. The Committee again expressed deep concern at the persisting insecurity, caused in particular by the ongoing banditry of "roadblockers" in the north of the country, and at acts of violence against civilians. It likewise expressed concern at the presence of Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army elements in the south-east and at the use of that region of the country as a crossing to neighbouring countries.

24. On the issue of human rights, the Committee encouraged the Government to pursue its efforts to combat impunity and reduce the number of extrajudicial killings, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Human Rights Council following his visit to the country.

(iii) Republic of Chad

25. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Chadian delegation concerning the 240,000 Sudanese refugees living in the eastern region of the country and the presence of armed rebel groups among them. It expressed satisfaction at the deployment, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), of a joint United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT)-European Union international force in eastern Chad mandated to provide security to Sudanese refugee camps and humanitarian workers.

26. The Committee also took note of the signing of a non-aggression and peace agreement by the Presidents of Chad and the Sudan on 13 March 2008, under the auspices of the Secretary-General. A contact group had been formed and had held a meeting in Libreville and another in Tripoli in the absence of the Sudanese Head of State.

27. The Committee expressed concern at the deterioration of relations between Chad and the Sudan and called upon both nations to re-establish dialogue, which should facilitate African Union joint mediation efforts and the implementation of the Dakar Agreement. The Committee endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the extraordinary summit of ECCAS Heads of State and Government on the situation in Chad, held in Kinshasa in March 2008.

28. In cooperation with Chad, the Committee launched an urgent appeal to the international community to resolve the Darfur crisis, and requested the United Nations to reactivate the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) disarmament project known as "Small Arms Project", which ceased to operate in 2006. It also called for measures to strengthen the capacity of security services in the subregion to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and for the establishment of appropriate border patrol mechanisms in the subregion.

29. The Committee had requested the ECCAS secretariat to produce a report on the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise, in which all States members of the Committee took part. Consideration of the report was deferred to the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

(iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo

30. The Committee welcomed the signature on 23 January 2008, by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rebel armed groups, of the Goma statement of commitment (*Acte d'engagement*) and of the Amani programme for peace, pacification, stability and development in the provinces of North and South Kivu; it urged all parties to work in good faith towards the prompt implementation of those texts.

31. The Committee welcomed the round table held in Kinshasa from 18 to 20 February 2008 on security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the start of judicial reform.

32. It also welcomed the Nairobi joint communiqué signed on 9 November 2007 by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda, which set out a common approach to ending the threat to peace and stability in both countries and in the Great Lakes region.

33. However, the Committee expressed deep concern at the deteriorating security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the Ituri region, and called upon the armed groups to turn in their weapons and participate unconditionally in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation process.

34. The Committee took due note of the information on the deplorable consequences of Mbororo nomad migrations in parts of the eastern province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, the Committee endorsed the recommendations made by the African Union fact-finding mission on that issue, in particular on the holding of a meeting of the countries concerned, as soon as possible under the auspices of the African Union, as provided for in the communiqué issued on 11 April 2008 at the 119th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

(v) Republic of Cameroon

35. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Cameroonian delegation on the peace and security situation in that country. It welcomed the fact that the measures taken recently by the Cameroonian authorities to improve the population's purchasing power, particularly the reduction of tariffs on essential commodities and the increase in Government employees' salaries, had significantly contributed to reducing social tensions.

36. It took note of the National Assembly's recent adoption, by a vast majority, of a constitutional amendment introduced by the Government, as well as of Government efforts to combat corruption. The Committee expressed concern at the ongoing criminal activities of "roadblockers" in some border areas in Cameroon, and called upon security forces in that country to continue making efforts to combat that phenomenon, in concert with neighbouring countries. It also welcomed Cameroon's contribution to the deployment of the European Union operation and the Central African Multinational Force in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic.

37. The Committee appealed to bilateral and multilateral donors to provide Cameroon with the support needed to deal with the refugee influx in the north, as a result of developments in Chad. It also called upon donors to provide the necessary support to affected countries and humanitarian organizations in order to ensure that refugees could return promptly to their home countries.

V. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa

(i) Proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and disarmament of civilian populations

38. The Committee noted with interest the information provided by Angola on the situation concerning small arms and light weapons proliferation in that country, as well as on the four-phase civilian disarmament programme launched by the Government.

(ii) Implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative

Code of conduct for Central African defence and security forces

39. The Committee took note with interest of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the preliminary draft code of conduct for defence and security forces in Central Africa.

40. The document submitted contained elements for inclusion in a code of conduct. The document was based on similar drafts prepared by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and, more recently, Togo.

41. However, the Regional Centre made an effort to address a number of characteristics specific to Central Africa that States would continue to supplement as the text was developed.

42. The general principles and guidelines set out in the preliminary draft code of conduct focused primarily on reaffirming the separate roles and responsibilities of the armed forces and security forces in a democratic republic.

43. Those principles were also intended to facilitate dialogue between civilians and the military in a subregion where armed conflicts had eroded the civilian population's trust.

44. Following the presentation, the Committee undertook to transmit its comments to the secretariat along with input for finalizing the code of conduct, with a view to adopting it at the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

Legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa

45. With regard to the component of the Sao Tome Initiative on the development and adoption of a legal instrument to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, the Committee noted with satisfaction the presentation of the ECCAS-commissioned study on the methodology that should be considered in order to develop and adopt the legal instrument and its plan of action.

46. The Committee commended the quality of the research conducted by the ECCAS consultant, in the context of its cooperation with the United Nations, in order to effectively develop the legal instrument.

47. Discussions took place on the origins of the Sao Tome Initiative and the methodology adopted and reaffirmed at the Committee's twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth ministerial meetings. According to the planned schedule, the development process should take two years, in order to reflect the conclusion of the work in a United Nations General Assembly resolution adopted at its sixty-fourth regular session.

48. In light of similar instruments developed in other African subregions, as well as global instruments, such as the Vienna Protocol on Firearms, the United Nations Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument on small arms and light weapons, but also given the lack of progress in implementing the programme of priority activities adopted in Brazzaville, the Committee strongly reaffirmed its decision to create a legally binding instrument for the subregion.

49. The discussions also highlighted the importance of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, and of monitoring of the instrument by ECCAS.

50. The Committee welcomed the important advances made in developing the instrument and encouraged its secretariat to provide it with a draft text containing elements drawn from relevant legal instruments.

51. Lastly, the Committee appealed to international partners, and donors in particular, to provide financial support for that initiative, which aimed to promote peace and stability.

(iii) Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons and related issues

52. The Committee took note with interest of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on preparations for the July 2008 biennial meeting on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The biennial meeting would focus in particular on illicit brokering, marking, tracing, stockpile management, assistance and cooperation.

53. The Committee encouraged all States to discuss, at the biennial meeting, the problems they faced and the assistance they needed in implementing the Programme of Action. The Committee also urged States to submit their national reports to the Office for Disarmament Affairs and to clearly convey their financial, material and human resource needs in their statements at the biennial meeting. Indeed, circulating information on States' actual assistance needs would allow their potential partners, including donors and non-governmental organizations, to develop more appropriate assistance programmes.

54. The Committee also took note of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the conduct of three training workshops on the universalization of the International Tracing Instrument on small arms and light weapons. The Central African States had been among those invited to the workshops, which had been financed by the European Union and held from 10 to 11 December 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, and from 17 to 18 April 2008 in Lomé, Togo.

55. Those workshops had given the participants a better understanding of the obligations contained in the Instrument. They had also helped State representatives to determine how and from whom to seek technical assistance. Lastly, the INTERPOL Weapons Electronic Tracing System (IWeTS) simulation had allowed participants to gain practical experience.

56. The Committee noted that the International Tracing Instrument, developed in 2006 in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action, would also be discussed at the biennial meeting. Therefore, the Committee encouraged States to include information on the traceability of small arms and light weapons in their national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

57. Furthermore, the Committee took note of the United Nations Security Council meeting held on 30 April 2008 to consider the first report of the Secretary-General to the Council on issues relating to small arms and light weapons (S/2008/258) and the 13 recommendations made in the report. It noted that such meetings would henceforth be held biannually and on the same schedule as the meetings on the

Programme of Action, with the aim of strengthening the synergies between the two mechanisms. In that connection, it expressed its satisfaction with the fact that the Republic of the Congo had informed the Security Council of the Committee's development of a legally binding instrument for Central Africa.

58. Lastly, the Committee also took note of the presentation given by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the training workshops on the universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons held at Lomé from 21 to 25 April 2008. The workshops had been organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa with financial support from the European Union. The Committee strongly encouraged States to ratify that Convention.

(iv) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa

59. The Committee took note of the briefing by the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the implementation in Africa of resolution 1540 (2004), adopted by the Security Council on 28 April 2004, which emphasized efforts to combat terrorism and the use of and trafficking in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery by non-State actors.

60. It noted with interest the information on the workshop held in Botswana in November 2007, which had been attended by some Central African countries that had not participated in the 2006 Accra workshop.

61. The Committee also welcomed the Programme of Action developed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its capacity as coordinator of the African Group on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

62. Lastly, the Committee encouraged States to submit their national transparency reports on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

VI. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms

63. The Committee took note of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat on the main activities conducted recently in the areas of peace, security and human integration.

64. It welcomed the progress achieved and the measures taken by ECCAS in the areas of mediation, combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, child protection and human trafficking prevention, promotion and protection of human rights, electoral assistance to member States, crisis prevention and resolution, and operational capacity-building for the Central African Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC).

VII. Report on the activities of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa

65. The Committee took note with interest of the activity report submitted by the Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

66. The Committee commended the broader partnership between the Centre and the States of the subregion, the Centre's increasing visibility and the revitalization of its activities. With regard to the support provided by the Centre to the Governments of the subregion, the Committee expressed satisfaction with the Centre's promotion, protection and follow-up activities on human rights and democracy. It also approved of the Centre's contribution to capacity-building of member States and civil society actors in the areas of human rights and democracy.

67. The Committee reiterated its support for the Centre's activities and expressed a wish for increased collaboration on peace and security in the subregion.

VIII. Date and place of the next meeting

68. The Committee decided to hold its twenty-eighth ministerial meeting in Libreville, Gabonese Republic. The Gabonese delegation informed the Committee that, due to a very busy internal schedule, the Gabonese Republic expected that the twenty-eighth meeting would be held during the first week of September and that the secretariat would be informed of the exact dates later. However, it was agreed that the host country, the Bureau and the secretariat of the Committee should hold consultations to determine the exact date of the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

IX. Other matters

69. The Committee once again commended the partnership between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and ECCAS; in that connection, it expressed renewed confidence in ECCAS and requested it to prepare the geopolitical review, an internal document that would provide a basis for discussions on that agenda item during the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. It requested that the document should take States' national contributions into account, clearly cite the information sources used and be circulated to member States not later than two weeks prior to the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting.

70. The Committee took note of the briefing by the Central African Republic on Mbororo nomad migrations. It also took note of the positions reiterated by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Lastly, it considered the communiqué issued at the 119th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held on 11 April 2008.

71. The Committee took note of the information provided by the Office for Disarmament Affairs regarding the financial difficulties that it faced in organizing the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting. It expressed concern at the insufficient resources allocated under the United Nations regular budget, the increase in costs that had had an impact on the organization of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting and the fact that there had been no voluntary contribution to the Committee Trust Fund. It vowed to make every effort to address that situation as soon as possible. It launched an appeal to the international community, with a particular emphasis on its partners, to continue to support the Committee and urged member States to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund in order to enable the Committee to pursue its activities.

72. The Committee decided to include the financial situation issue on the agenda of the twenty-eighth ministerial meeting, to be held in Libreville, Gabonese Republic.

73. The Committee took note of the Chairman's statement on the need to streamline the Committee's activities by examining its role and responsibilities. Such collective reflection on the part of the Committee should address in particular its areas of competence and those of the relevant subregional bodies, as well as their composition, their interactions and ways to optimize resource management. The Committee also raised the possibility of further involving potential donors and working to increase the visibility of the Committee's achievements.

74. The Committee decided that a working paper on its origins, mandate, achievements and future prospects should be considered at the Libreville ministerial meeting. It requested the Committee's secretariat to prepare the part of the paper that dealt with its origins, mandate and achievements, and it appointed Cameroon as ad hoc working paper coordinator to prepare the portion on future prospects. To that end, it requested all member States to submit their national contributions to Cameroon, which would incorporate them into the final document to be circulated to States by the Committee secretariat not later than two weeks prior to the meeting.

X. Adoption of the report of the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting

75. The Committee adopted the present report on 15 May 2008.

76. The participants commended the propitious atmosphere that had prevailed throughout the meeting. The following expression of thanks was read out:

> "We, the representatives of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, assembled for the twenty-seventh ministerial meeting, held from 13 to 15 May 2008 in Luanda, Republic of Angola,
>
> Reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of peace, security and stability deeply cherished by our respective peoples and to the socio-economic development of our subregion,
>
> Commend the individual and collective efforts of our countries to achieve peace, security, stability and development,
>
> Welcome the atmosphere of conviviality, brotherhood and mutual trust which has prevailed throughout our work, and
>
> Express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, and to the Government and people of Angola for the warm welcome and fraternal hospitality we have received during our stay in Angola."

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Item 47 of the preliminary list*
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2008
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Items 4, 6, 7 (f), 8, 13 and 14 of the provisional agenda**

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2007 of the Council

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Coordination, programme and other questions: ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflict

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B and 60/265, including 61/16

Economic and environmental questions

Social and human rights questions

Role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16

Report of the Secretary-General

* A/63/50.
** E/2008/100.

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Summary

The Economic and Social Council continues to promote an integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences. The annual ministerial review takes an in-depth look at a chosen cross-cutting theme common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. The results of the various conference follow-up processes are brought together in an integrated manner at the review. A focused effort through the annual ministerial review process would be the most effective way for the Council to review substantively the progress made in the integrated conference follow-up.

Several procedural improvements in the follow-up of conferences have facilitated the progress in advancing an integrated approach in the substantive work of Council machinery. The Council and its subsidiary bodies have increased their interaction among them. The functional commissions have completed examining their methods of work. The adoption of multi-year programme of work for the annual ministerial review will further facilitate the engagement by the Council system.

Given that the integrated substantive review is now being pursued by the annual ministerial review process and the procedural improvements of the follow-up processes have been completed for the time being, the annual report on the integrated follow-up may add little value going forward. The Council may wish to triennialize the report to provide a reasonable time period before the next overall review of the integrated conference follow-up. The General Assembly could continue its substantive review of the integrated follow-up based on the comprehensive annual report of the Economic and Social Council.

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations conferences and summits held since the 1990s generated an unprecedented global consensus on a shared vision of development. The broad-based framework laid the groundwork for the Millennium Summit, at which a series of time-bound goals and targets were adopted as the Millennium Development Goals. Five years later when world leaders returned to assess progress, they recognized that the achievement of many of the internationally agreed development goals was off track in a number of countries, and that vigorous implementation was needed without delay.

2. To close the implementation gap, world leaders pledged to develop and to implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve their national development priorities as well as the internationally agreed development goals. Member States committed themselves at the highest level to use the Millennium Development Goals and the goals and strategies agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits as the foundation of their national development strategies.

3. Since 1995, the Economic and Social Council has promoted an integrated and coordinated follow-up aimed at enhancing coherence among the various conference follow-up processes. The individual conference follow-up mechanisms and processes undertaken by various functional commissions together contribute to the whole spectrum of the United Nations development agenda, while maintaining their distinctiveness.

4. Several efforts have been made in order to strengthen the follow-up mechanism. Most recently, the annual ministerial review, launched in 2007 pursuant to the 2005 World Summit Outcome and General Assembly resolution 61/16, provides a central forum for all stakeholders to assess progress in overall implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and to examine the results that have been achieved in implementing the United Nations development agenda. It conducts a substantive review, focusing on cross-sectoral themes common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences, as envisaged by General Assembly resolutions 57/270 B and 61/16.

5. To complement the annual ministerial review, section II of the present report highlights the progress made on the conference follow-up as it relates to the theme of the 2008 annual ministerial review, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development", and the main policy issues discussed by the functional commissions. Section III of the report addresses the institutional aspects of the follow-up processes and how to promote policy coherence and strengthen the link between policy and operations.

II. Overview of assessments of progress emanating from conference review processes

6. The global conference follow-up mechanisms have framed their work around the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and have adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing the follow-up to their individual conferences, recognizing that the different goals and

targets agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits can be achieved only if they are pursued together. The functional commissions have been instrumental in maintaining focus on the implementation of the outcomes of different conferences within their respective purviews. The United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes also actively contribute to the annual ministerial review process through their participation in an organization of meetings, special events, and so on, and through the inputs they provide to the report of the Secretary-General. They also contribute to the relevant functional commissions, with focus on the implementation of conference outcomes.

A. Global perspective: assessments of progress by functional commissions

7. Although the adoption of the theme for the 2008 annual ministerial review came after most commissions had established their multi-year work programme, commissions made contributions to the theme in various ways on specific aspects of sustainable development, such as the impact of climate change to environmental statistics and indicators, urbanization, agriculture and rural development.

8. Against the backdrop of the current global food crisis, the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its sixteenth session, in May 2008, emphasized the need for ramping up investment in research and development in innovative and sustainable agricultural technologies and infrastructure in developing countries. The food crisis has highlighted the consequences for food security of neglecting agriculture and the urgency of redressing that situation. An integrated response was needed to address the multiple factors which contributed to the crisis. The long-term challenges include: trends in agricultural production, consumption and prices; the impacts of climate change and high energy prices; and new factors such as demand for biofuels. It was also recognized that the review of agriculture cannot be de-linked from the other components of the thematic cluster of the session, namely rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The session provided a foundation for discussions on the global food crises, in the Economic and Social Council on 20 May, and at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008.

9. Climate change was highlighted by many as having important implications for all the issues in this cluster, with particular challenges facing Africa and small island developing States. Pursuing sustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, was essential to progress in that important area.

10. Public-private partnerships, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development partnerships, have proven important in enhancing sustainable development, including through promoting multi-stakeholder involvement, resource mobilization and facilitation of technology transfer and diffusion. The private sector can play an important role in increasing agricultural production and promoting rural development.

11. Enhancement of capacity-building was of paramount importance, particularly in rural and remote areas. Lack of knowledge, appropriate legislation and institutional infrastructure, and weakness in education systems and human resources development continue to affect adversely the ongoing efforts for promoting

agricultural productivity, rural development and for combating desertification and land degradation.

12. Gender was a prominent cross-cutting issue for the current cycle of the Commission. The primary role of women in agriculture, notably in Africa, needs to be recognized and measures devised to enhance further their productivity, addressing the specific challenges that they may face in gaining access to land, credit and the legal system.

13. Addressing the means of implementation, including meeting commitments to financing for development, trade, technology transfer, scientific knowledge, education, and capacity-building, will be critical to ensuring progress. Greater policy coherence and coherence of donor support are required with regard to agriculture and the other issues under consideration. Progress in addressing the challenges identified by the Commission at its sixteenth session will require strengthened international cooperation, strong political commitment from Governments, and active engagement of all major groups, which the Commission is expected to consolidate at its seventeenth session.

14. The Commission on the Status of Women considered "Gender perspectives on climate change" as the emerging issue for its fifty-second session, through an interactive expert panel.[1] The outcome of the expert panel, in the form of a Chairperson's summary, has been forwarded as a contribution to the annual ministerial review. The Commission also transmitted a conference room paper on gender perspective and sustainable development (E/CN.6/2008/CRP.2) as input to the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2008 of the Council.

15. The panel discussion highlighted the gender-specific impacts of climate change. It noted that women are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and natural disasters because of their domestic responsibilities, including food security and provision of heat and water supply. Women play a vital leadership role in community revitalization and natural resource management, but they tend to be underrepresented in decision-making on sustainable development, including on climate change. To increase women's participation in climate change activities, actions are being taken to promote global and national networks that advocate for greater participation of women in the climate change negotiations and the inclusion of gender perspectives in policy formulation and evaluation. Action should also be taken to include gender mainstreaming in all mitigation and adaptation policies, including gender impact assessments and gender-responsive budgeting.

16. On forests, the adoption of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests on 17 December 2007 (General Assembly resolution 62/98, annex) was seen a historic achievement, which marked a new era in sustainable forest management and international cooperation. The instrument should also enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. The eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2009 will consider the topic "Forests in a changing environment", in particular in the context of climate change, biodiversity and desertification/deforestation.

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 7* (E/2008/27), chap. II.

17. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice discussed the need for holistic and comprehensive national multisectoral approaches to preventing and combating illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources, as well as for international coordination and cooperation in support of such approaches, including through technical assistance activities to build the capacity of relevant national officials and institutions.

18. On climate change, the Statistical Commission decided to develop an agenda for action by the statistical community. On development indicators, the Commission commended the efforts by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators in implementing some of the recommendations contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 and in including an increasing number of Member States in its deliberations.[2] It also took note of the serious concerns expressed by several Member States about the quality of the measurement of indicators, and requested submission of an updated report to the Commission at its next session. It also requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to give greater consideration to the need for improving the capacity of countries to produce the indicators and to increase efforts to further improve the indicators of all Millennium Development Goals through methodological and technical refinements.

19. At its seventh session, in 2008, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues discussed the theme "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges", focusing on the issue of climate change and research into mitigation measures being taken and how these are impacting on indigenous peoples.[3] A special focus was given to the Pacific region as an area that is already feeling the adverse impacts of climate change. The Forum urged States, the World Bank, and other multilateral and bilateral financial institutions to consider alternative systems beyond the perpetuation of highly centralized fossil-fuel-based energy supplies and large-scale bioenergy and hydropower dams. The Forum called for an increase in support for renewable, low-carbon and decentralized systems, taking into account the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams. The Forum stressed that indigenous peoples must have a say in decision-making processes on how to combat global climate change. The Forum also made a number of recommendations on the Millennium Development Goals and human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, among other issues.

20. The functional commissions also pursued follow-up of conferences according to their multi-year work programmes, encompassing the various aspects of the United Nations development agenda including: employment, ageing, gender and finance, post-conflict peacebuilding, violence against women, alternative development and the information society.

21. Full and productive employment has been recognized as a global priority following the World Summit for Social Development, which placed the goal of full and productive employment at the centre of the United Nations development agenda. Governments committed to promoting full employment as a basic priority of their economic and social policies. Since the 2005 World Summit, full

[2] Ibid., *Supplement No. 4* (E/2008/24), chap. I.B, decision 39/114.

[3] Ibid., *Supplement No. 23* (E/2008/43), chap. I.

employment and decent work for all received renewed attention. The substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2006 and the ministerial declaration further highlighted the importance of promoting full employment and decent work.

22. In 2007, the review segment of the Commission for Social Development undertook an evaluation of progress in achieving the goals of full employment and decent work, and their impact on poverty eradication and social integration. At its forty-sixth policy session, in 2008, the Commission for Social Development focused on policies and practical measures to facilitate the implementation of the goal of full employment and decent work. It resulted in action-oriented resolution "Promoting full employment and decent work for all", which reaffirmed the commitments of the Social Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and recognized that a people-centred approach must be at the centre of economic and social development. It was stressed that full and productive employment and decent work for all are key elements of the sustainable development of all countries and reaffirmed that it should be made a central objective of national policies and international policies as well as national development strategies, as part of the global efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.[4]

23. Also during its forty-sixth session, the Commission for Social Development concluded the first review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. The Commission adopted a resolution encouraging Governments to continue their efforts to mainstream the concerns of older persons into their policy agendas and to strengthen efforts to develop their national capacity to address the national implementation priorities identified during the review and appraisal exercise. In addition, the Commission acknowledged the essential contributions of the regional commissions to the implementation, review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan, including the organization of regional review and appraisal meetings and the preparation of their outcome documents and encouraged the international community to enhance international cooperation to support national efforts to eradicate poverty.[5]

24. On financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-second session, adopted agreed conclusions[6] to be brought to the attention of the General Assembly as an input into the preparations for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008. By its agreed conclusions, the Commission emphasized the need for political commitment to make available human and financial resources for the empowerment of women and that funding had to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission also reaffirmed the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which called upon Governments to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all policies and budgetary processes, as appropriate, in order to promote equitable, effective and appropriate resource

[4] Ibid., *Supplement No. 6* (E/2008/26), chap. I.A.

[5] Ibid., chap. I.C.

[6] Ibid., *Supplement No. 7* (A/2008/27), chap. I.A.

allocation and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes that enhance women's empowerment.

25. On post-conflict peacebuilding, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue to evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding", adopted by the Commission at its forty-eighth session in 2004. Participants confirmed that attention to gender equality issues and women's full and effective participation in peace processes and peacebuilding was crucial in the promotion of gender equality, as well as in ensuring the sustainable and effective reconstruction of political, social, economic and legal structures in countries emerging from conflict. Despite progress made since the adoption of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2004 and of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), participants noted a continuing underrepresentation of women in peace negotiations and processes.

26. Regarding violence against women, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission held a joint dialogue on indicators to measure violence against women. Such indicators and the data collected to support them would increase the visibility and give a clearer picture of the scope of violence against women, and of trends within and between countries. They would significantly enhance States' capacity to put in place effective policy and other measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women. Participants recognized the need for capacity-building and institutional development to ensure the involvement of the national statistical offices in the collection and dissemination of statistics on violence against women. Participants emphasized the need to harmonize methodologies for the collection of data and statistics and to allocate sufficient human and financial resources.

27. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice stressed that States have an obligation to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including women and girls, and must exercise due diligence in preventing and investigating violence against women and girls and in punishing the perpetrators of such violence in order to eliminate impunity and to provide protection to the victims and that failure to do so violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

28. At its forty-first session, in 2008, the Commission on Population and Development adopted a resolution on national, regional and international action on the subject of population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development.[7] In that resolution, the Commission recognized that the world population was undergoing a historic and unprecedented transformation from being mostly rural to being predominantly urban, with major disparities in the level of urbanization remaining among regions and countries. The Commission considered that the rapid urbanization of the world's population required integrated and participatory approaches to spatial management, including through coordinated action between national Governments and local authorities, with the support of the international community. In that regard, the Commission urged Governments to promote linkages between urban and rural areas in recognition of their economic,

[7] Ibid., *Supplement No. 5* (E/2008/25), chap. I.B, resolution 2008/1.

social and environmental interdependence. The Commission also called upon Governments to address the challenges and opportunities of urban growth and internal migration by taking prompt, forward-looking and sustained action to ensure that those phenomena would have a positive impact on economic growth, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. The Commission also called upon the international community to support the efforts of developing countries in that regard, including through building capacities to respond to those challenges and opportunities.

29. On the issue of promoting sustainability and integrality in alternative development as an important part of drug control strategy, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs emphasized that the problem of illicit production of narcotic drugs is often related to development problems, in particular poverty, health and illiteracy, and that they must be tackled in a larger development context through a holistic and integrated approach. The Commission encouraged Member States, in the context of the review of the progress achieved in meeting the goals and targets set in the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, to consider developing a set of international guiding principles on alternative development, based on the sharing of best practices and lessons learned from different countries and regions.[8]

30. Implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society is being undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/252. The challenges ahead are to ensure the comprehensive exchange of views, information and experiences, promotion of policy dialogue and advocacy for the implementation of the Summit outcomes by a variety of United Nations bodies, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and partners, requiring the strengthening of cooperation and collaboration, and flow of information among all parties involved.

31. In response to those challenges, the Council, in its resolutions 2007/8 and 2007/29, decided that it would monitor the information exchange on the Summit outcomes in the context of its annual consideration of the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, on the basis of the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and drawing upon other relevant inputs.

32. The United Nations, the intergovernmental bodies and multi-stakeholders constitute the major players on the implementation and follow-up activities of the Summit. In response to Council resolution 2007/8, entitled "Flow of information for the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society", a report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the Summit at the regional and international levels (E/CN.16/2008/2) as submitted to the Commission. The report assessed global and regional progress in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society and highlighted major initiatives including the facilitation of the exchange of views, information and experiences, building capacities and the promotion of policy dialogue and advocacy for mainstreaming information and communication technologies for development. Also, in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (see A/60/687), cooperation, exchange of information and

[8] Ibid., *Supplement No. 8* (E/2008/28), chap. I.A, draft resolution I.

promotion, and enhancing cooperation among diverse stakeholders, are activities undertaken through a system of action-line facilitators.

B. Regional perspectives

33. The regional commissions have placed the Millennium Development Goals at the centre of their work programmes and continue to contribute to the efforts of their member States towards meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The follow-up work has taken several forms — research, policy analysis, advocacy, promoting policy dialogue, sharing best practices, developing codes and indicators and monitoring their implementation, and strengthening statistical capacities for tracking progress towards the development goals. They have helped identify regional priority areas for action and have realigned their programmes accordingly.

34. In the area of sustainable development, the regional commissions support the integration of environmental concerns into the broader development agenda at the national, subregional and regional levels in order to strengthen the interface between environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic development in national policymaking for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction. The Commissions conduct the preparation of regional assessment reports and regional implementation meetings to inform and contribute regional perspectives to processes mandated by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Interregional collaboration is also taking place. For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat are working together on a project to improve the availability, reliability, timeliness and comparability of environment statistics, indicators and accounts.

35. Countries in Africa have made real efforts to integrate the Millennium Development Goals into their national development plans and strategies and aligned them with the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. With support from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and other organizations, over 41 countries have started the process of preparing national development strategies aligned with the Millennium Development Goals and other development goals. However, the region continues to suffer from chronic and rising poverty and at current trends, Africa as a region is not likely to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. ECA has contributed to the work of the Millennium Development Goal Africa Steering Group and its Working Group, which was established by the Secretary-General in September 2007 to mobilize resources and sustain international support for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. Furthermore, as a strategic partner to the African Peer Review Mechanism, ECA continued to participate actively in the process and contribute technical inputs to the country reviews carried out in 2007. The third assessment report on the Millennium Development Goals, jointly prepared by ECA and the African Union Commission, will be submitted to the next African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in July 2008.

36. To assist African countries in addressing the challenge of climate change through policy research and capacity-building, an African Climate Policy Centre

will be established at ECA in partnership with The Energy and Resources Institute of India and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). ECA is also actively involved in the development of the African Union/ECA/African Development Bank joint initiative on land policy that seeks to develop and build consensus on a continental framework and guidelines for land policy in Africa.

37. For countries in the Asia-Pacific region, major gaps remain in both the formulation and implementation of the national development strategies, including limited institutional capacity to implement development strategies and lack of financial resources. Regarding sustainable development, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized a regional implementation meeting for the Commission on Sustainable Development in November 2007, in collaboration with several United Nations entities, to review the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The meeting identified the development of environmentally sustainable economic growth patterns, based on a vibrant and inclusive rural sector and the eco-efficient use of natural capital, as the overarching and unique challenge for Asia and the Pacific. At its sixty-fourth session in April 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific examined the theme "Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific".[9]

38. In Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC has been promoting the establishment of linkages between the implementation of the "leading actions" identified in the Monterrey Consensus and that of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. These follow-up actions have mainly focused on analytical work, promoting policy dialogue, capacity-building and sharing of best practices. Since 2003, ECLAC has been taking advantage of its annual Regional Seminar on Fiscal Policy to hold methodological workshops on environmental expenditure and investment, aimed at promoting the use of uniform and comparable methodologies to quantify and classify public and private environmental expenditure and investment, in order to improve the quality of the information available to decision makers in designing funding strategies for environmental purposes. In addition to those efforts for integrated follow-up, the secretariat has been assisting member States with the formulation of regional consensus documents for presentation to upcoming United Nations conferences, summits and review meetings. Furthermore, ECLAC developed and maintains the inter-agency website (www.eclac.cl/cumbres) for the integrated follow-up to United Nations summits and conferences, which includes a decentralized management module to allow funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to present their contributions to the various international conferences, thus facilitating the exchange of information required for improving inter-agency coordination and enhancing system-wide coherence.

39. In the Arab region, a partnership formed since 2003 among ESCWA, UNEP and the League of Arab States follows up on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation by providing regular substantive technical support to the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment. ESCWA also cooperates with the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Electricity in the field of energy for sustainable development. Programmes to improve energy efficiency in the various

[9] Ibid., *Supplement No. 19* (E/2008/39), chap. III.

economic sectors have been implemented with reasonable success, and integration projects on electricity grids interconnection and gas distribution networks have been implemented. Policies to support such trends have been integrated in national decision-making in several counties in the region. ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and UNEP, launched a Programme on Trade and Environment Capacity-Building in the Arab Region. In the area of sustainable water resources management, all ESCWA member countries are currently reviewing their national water strategies within the Integrated Water Resources Management framework, but very few countries have completed those strategies and integrated them into social and economic development frameworks.

40. In Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has been implementing a major reform, including the promotion of an intersectoral and cross-sectoral approach to its activities. The reform identified the Millennium Development Goals and gender as cross-sectoral issues to address within the ECE framework. The session of the Commission became biennial since 2007. At its 2009 session, the Commission will review the reform and the progress made.

III. Promoting policy coherence and strengthening the link between the global policy debate and national activities

41. The Economic and Social Council has an important role in assessing how the organizations of the United Nations system integrate the United Nations development agenda in their programmes of work and provide coherent support to the implementation of these national strategies. The present section will examine the progress made in strengthening policy coherence (the horizontal coordination) at the intergovernmental, inter-agency and country levels, and the link between policy and operational activities (the vertical coordination).

A. Promoting policy coherence at the intergovernmental level

42. Several procedural improvements in the follow-up of conferences have facilitated the progress in advancing an integrated approach in the substantive work of the Council machinery, as called for by relevant resolutions. The Council, in its resolution 2007/29, noted the completion of functional commissions' review of their working methods, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/270 B and by the Council in its resolution 2006/44.

43. Since July 2002, the Bureau of the Council and the chairpersons of the functional commissions have met annually to exchange views on how the subsidiary machinery of the Council might enhance its contribution to the Council's role as the principal body in overseeing the overall implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. In 2007, such a meeting was held for the first time in January, given the new mandates and structure of the Council as called for in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, and confirmed in General Assembly resolution 61/16. On 29 January 2008, the Bureau of the Council met with the chairpersons of the functional commissions again to consider ways in which the Council's subsidiary machinery can contribute to the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum.

44. **To ensure that the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum function effectively as a review mechanism, the Council's subsidiary and related bodies should provide analyses and policy inputs that enhance the coordinated and integrated follow-up of the outcomes of the conferences and summits and help to advance national development strategy formulation, evaluate progress and promote international cooperation in pursuit of development goals**.

45. The establishment of a multi-year work programme for the annual ministerial review provides predictability in the themes of the review, which facilitates timely preparations, enables full engagement of the Council system and mobilizes expertise from Member States, the United Nations system, and other stakeholders. Standing agenda items introduced by a number of the functional commissions facilitate the preparation of the substantive inputs. **Functional and regional commissions, as well as agencies, and United Nations system entities should be encouraged to review their priorities and programmes taking into account the multi-year work programme of the annual ministerial review**. This would ensure that the support for the review becomes systematic and a priority in the work of the United Nations system.

46. Collaboration among functional commissions has been taking place to enhance policy coherence by holding joint bureau meetings and interactive expert panels, on cross-cutting issues. For example, the Commission on the Status of Women has continued its close collaboration with the Statistical Commission, through a joint high-level round-table and two joint parallel events on the development of indicators, including on violence against women. The Commission on the Status of Women has also organized meetings with other functional commissions to exchange views on key issues as well as to promote mainstreaming of gender perspectives into their work. For example, in preparation for the review processes, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women has held meetings with the Chairpersons of the Commission on Population and Development and the Commission for Social Development. Since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the President of the Human Rights Council has been invited to participate in the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

B. Reporting on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences

47. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly may wish to reassess the value added of the annual reporting on the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. In paragraph 39 of its resolution 57/270B, the General Assembly established the agenda item to be taken up annually to consider the assessment of the implementation of the conference outcomes, and to consider the relevant chapters of the annual report of the Council. However, that arrangement was put in place before the conception and launch of the annual ministerial review.

48. The United Nations system organizations as well as the Council's subsidiary bodies together conduct a vast amount of activities contributing to conference follow-up, covering the entire development spectrum. The resolutions of the Council under this item in recent years indicate that reviewing this information in a

sweeping manner has not prompted any action-oriented directives or new substantive insights. Given the vastness of this task, a focused effort through the annual ministerial review process would be a more effective way to conduct the Council's overall responsibilities in the integrated conference follow-up. This is also consistent with the spirit of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly (resolutions 50/227, 52/12B, 57/270B and 61/16).

49. The annual ministerial review takes an in-depth look at a chosen cross-cutting theme common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. The results of the various conference follow-up processes are brought together in an integrated manner at the annual ministerial review. This is, in effect, an integrated and substantive way in which the Council can review progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of those conferences and summits and their follow-up processes and assess its impact on the achievement of the goals and targets of the conferences and summits, as envisaged by General Assembly resolution 61/16.

50. Coordination issues of the United Nations system are addressed in the following year's coordination segment. In its resolution 57/270B, the General Assembly invites the functional commissions and relevant follow-up mechanisms to contribute from their specific perspectives to the assessment by the Council of the cross-sectoral thematic issue selected for the coordination segment of its substantive session, including through the possible participation of their chairpersons, suitably mandated, in the discussions on the cross-sectoral thematic issue in the Council. As in previous years, the Council will have such opportunity to exchange views with the chairperson at the panel discussion to be organized for that purpose.

51. Given that the integrated substantive review is now being pursued by the annual ministerial review process and the procedural improvements of the follow-up processes have been completed for the time being, the annual report on the integrated follow-up may add little value going forward. **The Council may wish to triennialize the report to provide a reasonable time period before the next overall review of the integrated conference follow-up.**

52. At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly will review the implementation of resolution 61/16, which covers the procedural aspects of the Council's new functions. The Assembly could continue its substantive review of the integrated follow-up based on the annual comprehensive report of the Economic and Social Council.

C. Linking normative and operational work: promoting policy coherence at the inter-agency level and ensuring coordination at the country level

53. The 2005 World Summit Outcome called for strengthening of the linkages between the normative work of the United Nations and its operational activities. Linking the discussion of policy options to specific country experiences results in a more specific and hands-on debate and brings the Council closer to bridging the

divide between the normative and operational work of the United Nations. The annual ministerial reviews and the Development Cooperation Forums provide key forums for advancing that objective. During the annual ministerial review's national voluntary presentations, countries present an assessment of their progress towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals based on detailed national reports.[10] By systematically drawing upon regional and country-level assessments, the annual ministerial review can help to bridge the gap between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system.

54. Over the past few years, the United Nations system organizations have progressively strengthened their support to the integrated conference follow-up at the country level. Their effectiveness in promoting a more coordinated United Nations country team response to national priorities has increased through a number of tools such as the common country assessments, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the results matrix, thematic groups and joint programmes. The "One United Nations" approach demonstrates the commitment of the Organization to strengthening system-wide coherence by delivering as one entity, and to align country programmes with national priorities as reflected in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and work in a cohesive, integrated, and more effective manner, while strengthening national ownership of development efforts. Driven by the strong belief that increased system-wide coherence in the working modalities of United Nations system member organizations can contribute significantly to their ability to deliver better "programmatic" results, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) is working to harmonize business practices across the United Nations system to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of United Nations system assistance.

55. However, despite the significant improvements made in recent years, the diverse approaches and the uneven capacities available to support country-level presence and action across the system continue to limit the system's capacity to mount integrated and comprehensive responses.

56. To help promote further coherence, the Economic and Social Council could develop stronger functional linkages with operational parts of the United Nations system through inter-agency arrangements that support the annual ministerial review. With the aim of strengthening its role and functioning, CEB recently completed a review of its structure and working methods. The integration of the United Nations Development Group into the CEB framework, alongside its two standing subsidiary bodies — the High Level Committee on Management and the High Level Committee on Programmes — that resulted from this review, will help ensure that operations at the country level are aligned with the strategic directions and priorities pursued at the programme level, while at the same time providing the mechanisms to strengthen coordination at the country level and incorporating feedback from country-level cooperation into programme and management processes at Headquarters level.

57. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs continues to serve as a platform for analytical and normative activities on economic and social issues

[10] See the 2008 National Voluntary Presentations Concept Note and 2008 National Voluntary Presentations Report Outline at http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfund/amrnational.shtml.

within the United Nations Secretariat and to promote enhanced coordination and coherence among its members. The activities of the Executive Committee encompass a broad range of policy issues geared towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Executive Committee actively supports the Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review, particularly with regard to the preparatory process and consultations at the regional level.

58. **A closer interaction between the Council and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the newly constituted CEB structure and the executive boards of funds and programmes could help ensure that the United Nations system organizations effectively support the implementation of conference commitments through their programming frameworks. The functional commissions should also continue to explore ways to engage United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes more systematically in their work. Further efforts would be needed to make effective use of the mechanisms for cooperation with financial and trade institutions, as envisaged in the 2005 World Summit and in the Monterrey Consensus.**

D. Strengthening the relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in the implementation of the development goals

59. Since 1998, the Economic and Social Council has held a special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization immediately after the Spring meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The origin for those meetings can be found in the context of United Nations reform measures adopted at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, specifically in Assembly resolution 50/227. The meetings have facilitated a free-flowing dialogue among ministers of finance returning from the Washington, D.C., meetings, on the one hand, and ministers of development cooperation as well as ministers and high-level officials of foreign affairs, on the other. Civil society and private sector representatives have also participated in those meetings. The multi-stakeholder nature of the event has helped to strengthen partnerships for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

60. The 2002 Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development encouraged the United Nations, the World Bank and IMF, with the World Trade Organization, "to address issues of coherence, coordination and cooperation, as a follow-up to the Conference, at the spring meeting between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions".[11] Since then, the meeting has become a major intergovernmental focal point for follow-up to the agreements reached and commitments made at the International Conference on Financing for Development.

61. The 2008 special high-level meeting had special significance as it took place during the preparations for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for

[11] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha, from 29 November to 2 December 2008. Under the overall theme "Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, including new challenges and emerging issues", the meeting provided major substantive inputs to the outcome of the Doha Review Conference.

62. As the Council now undertakes the annual ministerial reviews and the Development Cooperation Forums, its dialogue with the international financial and trade institutions will need to be further strengthened. While the number of ministers participating in the meeting has decreased in recent years, participation and full engagement of an unprecedented number of Executive Directors in both the meeting itself and the preparatory process has enriched the event.

63. The civil society and private sector component could be further strengthened and geared towards promoting collaboration and partnership between companies, foundations, Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to advance United Nations goals in the follow-up to the Monterrey Conference and the 2005 World Summit.

64. **Modalities for interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at the intergovernmental level should be further strengthened, subject to the outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.**

E. Creating partnerships and alliances with all stakeholders

65. Over the last 15 years, there has been an unprecedented rise in the involvement of civil society and business representatives in United Nations conferences and summits. The participation of advocacy and interest groups, business and industry, research and academic institutions, and other relevant stakeholders has injected dynamism into the intergovernmental process and has strengthened engagement in the implementation of conference outcomes.

66. The innovative modalities of cooperation established for the annual ministerial review and the Development Cooperation Forum have opened new opportunities to inject dynamism into the follow-up of the conferences, by promoting greater interaction among the different constituencies. This will be critical in building credibility for a genuinely strengthened Economic and Social Council through the sustained engagement and commitment of stakeholders.

67. As in 2007, a series of preparatory activities were held prior to the annual ministerial review in 2008. These included: (a) an open, online, month-long, multi-stakeholder e-discussion on the theme of the annual ministerial review, which engaged discussants with wide geographic coverage and diversity of views; (b) national multi-stakeholder meetings in Bangladesh, Barbados, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Ethiopia and Ghana in preparation of the voluntary national presentations taking the form of high-level dialogues with participants from Government, civil society and the private sector; (c) a regional forum in Bahrain on the theme of the review, bringing together multi-stakeholder participants from the region; and (d) an

informal event at United Nations Headquarters with expert panels examining sub-themes and engaging members of the United Nations community in interactive dialogue. The Economic and Social Council NGO Forum was held on 7 April 2008 as an opportunity to share best practices and success stories. At the 2007 annual ministerial review in Geneva, an Innovation Fair showcasing innovative programmes and projects was held with the participation of 12 United Nations system agencies, 29 civil society organizations and 10 private sector entities. The 2008 Innovation Fair is expected to draw a similar level of participation. **The Innovation Fair should evolve into a "matchmaking" event and be leveraged to seek solutions to the problems identified in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.**

68. The preparations for the 2008 Development Cooperation Forum have reflected the multi-stakeholder nature of the Forum. In addition to the Stakeholder Forum in Rome, which engaged parliamentarians and high-level representatives from civil society and local governments in an open and interactive dialogue on their roles in contributing to effective development cooperation, the high-level symposiums in Vienna and Cairo managed to provide stakeholders with a platform that complemented the participation of programme countries and bilateral and multilateral donors. Those three major preparatory events were each attended by more than 100 participants and partnerships with individual civil society, and international organizations played a key role in connecting a number of stakeholders. The inclusion of civil society organizations, parliamentarians as well as local government and private sector representatives provides for a unique opportunity to garner a wide range of inputs for a deepened dialogue on the future of international development cooperation. **The Forum should continue to take advantage of its distinctive profile by providing ample opportunities for the expression of views, priorities and analysis throughout the Development Cooperation Forum process.**

69. Economic and Social Council mechanisms such as the United Nations Information and Communications Technology Task Force, launched by the Council in 2001, and the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development, approved by the Secretary-General on 28 March 2006, provide lessons in building global multi-stakeholder partnerships and alliances to further expand the Council's reach and circle of participants in its global policy dialogue.

III. Conclusion

70. **With the launching of the annual ministerial review, the process of integrated and coordinated follow-up to conferences has become more substantive and visible. This should be nurtured by full support from functional commissions and the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. However, structural and procedural changes for making the Economic and Social Council system more coherent and integrative will need to be reviewed at regular intervals. A triennial approach may be the best way to address this dimension of integrated follow-up.**